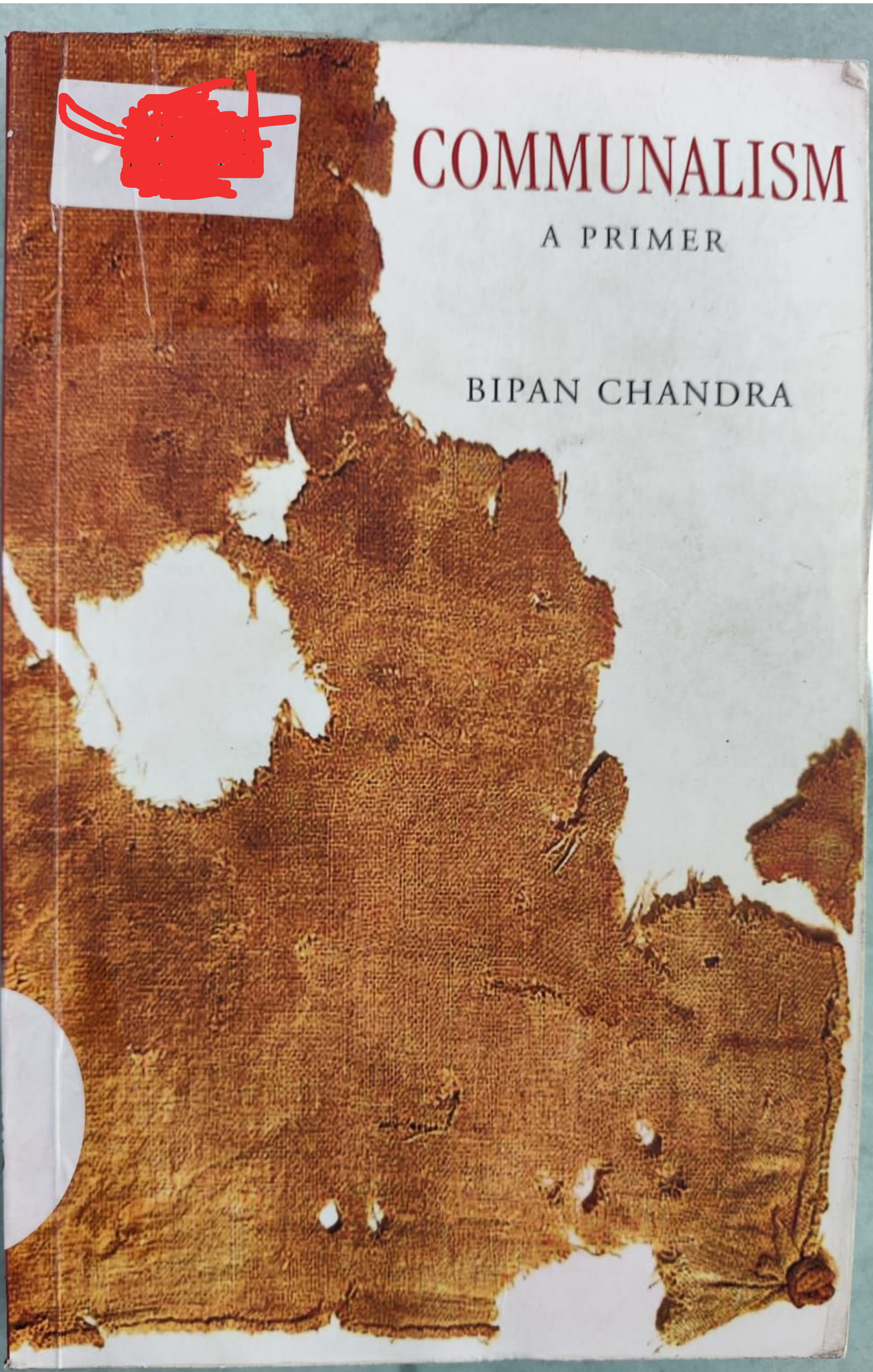

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COMMUNALISM

A PRIMER

BIPAN CHANDRA

Communalism is today identified as one of the biggest threats facing society. The primer argues that while communalism is very often equated with religious fundamentalism, it actually represents an ideology. To counter it successfully, communal thinking has to be uprooted from people's minds. The struggle against communalism has to recognise the century-old heritage of inculcation and spread of communal ideology among the masses. The author argues that once the ideological character of communalism is recognised, combating it would require a dual-pronged strategy both at the political as well the ideational level. The primer offers a comprehensive study of key concepts such as the distinction between communalism and secularism; major themes in the communal ideological offensive and an inventory of practical dos and don'ts. A valuable contribution to the debate.

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PREFACE

Communalism is basically seen as an ideology. As I have argued in this booklet, to defeat and uproot communalism, communal thinking has to be uprooted from people's minds and serious and continuous struggle has to be waged against communal ideology. This is also brought out by international as also our own experience. For example, Hitler's entire racist programme was laid out in his autobiography, *Mein Kamph*, published much before his capture of power. Many people believed that he just wanted political power and would be like any other rightwing leader. But driven by his racialist ideology he proved how dangerous it was to ignore the ideological content of his politics. (Similarly, to understand Hindu communalism one should read *The We* by M.S. Golwalkar and *Hindutva* by V.D. Savarkar or the post 1937 speeches of Mohammad Ali Jinnah on Muslim Communalism).

Likewise, slavery was abolished in USA in 1864 by Abraham Lincoln but slave-owners' ideology remained and so did the miserable condition of the black people. In the 20th century, especially after 1945, laws were passed in various states of America giving the black people various rights, but it was only as a result of hard ideological struggle by the anti-racialist Americans—blacks and whites—intellectuals and common people—that racism began to recede in that country and the social position of the black people started to improve, though much still remains to be done.

Ideologies like racism, communalism and casteism take immense and prolonged effort to be eradicated. A good example is that of anti-Semitism (anti-Jews) in the Soviet Union. Anti-Semitism was strongly entrenched in the Tsarist Russia. The communist movement struggled against it. Some of its major leaders were Jews. After 1917, Lenin and other leaders of the Communist Party attacked anti-Semitism in schools, the press, the arts and, in fact, in all sectors and in all forms. Yet it burst out at moments of crisis and remained a force in the Soviet society.

Unfortunately, the secular forces have not realized this truth sufficiently. They have opposed communal forces and parties politically but have not exposed and opposed communal ideology. They have become complacent every time communal parties have suffered a political set back. For example, even though BJP was defeated electorally in 2004, yet communalism remains as strong as it was before 2004.

This aspect can be brought out clearly by taking a few more examples from our recent past.

In early 1950s communal parties were weakened electorally as a result of Gandhiji's martyrdom and Nehru's strong electoral campaign against them in the elections of 1951-52. They were electorally decimated and it was the communists who emerged as the mass opposition in the Parliament. Nehru and the Left became complacent after that and it took the Jabalpur riot of 1959 to wake them up. But when communal forces receded during 1960-62 as a result of India-China crisis and the resulting war, secular forces once again went to sleep. Similarly, the BJP was reduced to near zero seats in the elections of 1984. But communal ideology continued to flourish. The BJP had in early 1980s tried to mobilize around Ganga Jal Yatra from Kathmandu to Kanya Kumari but did not succeed. Then in 1984 it initiated small Rath yatras throughout UP and Bihar around Ram Jananbhoomi issue. These were ignored by secular forces but their relative success emboldened BJP to initiate an All-India Rath Yatra on the issue in 1988. The country now woke up, though rather late to the prevalence of communal ideology.

The ignoring of communal ideology was, in a way, responsible for the vivisection of the country in 1947. In the elections of 1936-37, the Muslim League got only 3 per cent of all-India votes and only 11 per cent of the legislative seats. The secular forces began to ignore communalism. They woke up only when they found that by 1945 it had acquired monstrous proportions. But they woke up too late.

Similarly, the RSS had been growing in the Punjab and Northern India during the 1940s, but because it maintained a low public and political profile, it was not seen as a force to reckon with. It was only its role in the communal killings of 1946-47 and the assassination of Gandhiji by a communal fanatic, that the country became aware of the large proportions to which the RSS had grown.

Let me take three other contemporary examples. The whole country was outraged by the Gujarat killings of 2002 and rightly blamed Narendra Modi for their ferocity. But the roots of the killings did not lie in Modi. They lay in the prolonged communalization of Gujarati society since the 1970s. Modi only took advantage of this process.

Similarly, Punjab was being communalized since early

1950s. Bhinderanwale and communal terrorism of the 1980s and 1990s were only the culmination of the earlier spread of communal ideology in Punjab.

Lastly, I will like to mention Kerala's case. BJP has not won a single seat in Kerala in the last 15-20 years, but we can ignore the spread of communalism in the state's middle classes only at our peril.

Many members of the Delhi Historians Group, in particular Mridula and Aditya Mukherjee, Sucheta Mahajan, Visalakshi Menon, Anthony Thomas, Salil Misra, Sashi Bhusan Upadhyaya, Bhupinder Yadav, Neera Singh and Rakesh Batabyal have played an active role in the preparation of the primer. Shri Prabhash Joshi has helped in many ways.

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DEFINITION OF SECULARISM AND COMMUNALISM

Communalism is today the most serious threat facing the Indian people and India as a nation. It can tear apart Indian society and become a menace to the hard-won unity of the Indian people, and unleash forces of barbarism, as it did in Gujarat and earlier in Bombay, Bangalore, Jabalpur, Bhagalpur, Meerut, Moradabad, Punjab and Delhi.

Moreover, it is no longer a local or regional phenomenon. It has become a nation-wide phenomenon as the electoral success of the BJP and growth of other front-organizations of the RSS during the last few years indicates. It breaks out in a violent form sometimes here, sometimes there but, with varying degrees of intensity, it has begun to pervade the entire country.

While not giving way to a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness in facing the communal challenge, the starting point has to be the realization that the way out is going to be a long haul. There are no short-term or instant solutions to the problems generated over decades and generations. Communalization of India has been occurring for over 100 years, actively encouraged for the 50 years before independence by the colonial rulers. De-communalization has also, therefore, to be a process. The Indian national movement and the Congress had firmly, though not fully, successfully opposed communalism. Gandhiji's assassination in January 1948 had led to revulsion against communalism generated during the partition riots of 1946-47. During 1951-52, Jawaharlal Nehru had made communalism a major election issue and marginalized the communal parties. But the struggle against communalism has to be initiated afresh as it has been more or less neglected since then.

Let us first define the terms secularism and communalism.

At the outset it may be suggested that some people have been creating a false dichotomy between the so-called Western and the so called Indian definitions of secularism. In fact secularism has a common definition with certain specific features in India because of its specific historical conditions. Basically, secularism means separation of the state, politics and other non-religious areas of life from religion and religion being treated as a purely personal matter. (Gandhiji's agreement with this view is discussed in Appendix I below). This is the universal element. To talk of any Indian definition of secularism which would deny this is to deny secularism.

Furthermore India is a land of many religions. Out of this diversity arises another specific feature of secularism in India. The state must be dissociated from any kind of religion and it should be neutral towards all religions. Religious persons put this view in their own words: The state should have equal regard for all religions. The two formulations, however, are different ways of saying the same thing. This doctrine of state neutrality also takes the constitutional form of extending equal opportunities to followers of all religions

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It should be made very clear that secularism is not opposed to religion. As Nehru put it, secularism 'does not obviously mean a state where religion as such is discouraged. It means freedom of religion and conscience, including freedom of those who may have no religion. It means free play of all religions, subject only to their not interfering with each other or with basic conceptions of our state'.

Secularism has another specific feature peculiar to India. In India, secularism arose at the end of the 19th century as the ideology of uniting the Indian people in their struggle against colonialism. The colonial state from the beginning, and most actively after 1858, set out to divide Indian people along caste, linguistic, regional and religious lines. In particular, it gave support to communalism which emerged at the dawn of the 20th century as the main threat to the united anti-colonial struggle of the Indian people. It was to meet this challenge of a powerful divisive force that the Indian national movement adopted and propagated secularism from the last quarter of the 19th century. Hence, in India, secularism came to mean, above all, opposition to communalism. This is equally true today.

WHAT IS COMMUNALISM?

Simply put communalism is based on the assumption that Indian society is divided into religious communities whose interests not only differ but are even opposed to each other. Communalism starts with the belief that in India people can be organized and grouped together for secular, that is, economic and political as also social and cultural purposes, only around their religious identities. In other words, Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs or Christians form distinct communities or homogeneous groups not only for religious but also for secular purposes, because they follow the same religion. They form not only religious but also political communities. This belief is the starting point of communalism. Next, because of this fact, people belonging to different religion based communities are seen as having different secular interests. This is the communalism that prevailed in India from the end of the 19th century till 1936. It may be described as liberal communalism. However, while the liberal communalists argued that Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs have some different and divergent secular interests, which must be adjusted through pressure and negotiations, they also held that these religious communities also had many more common secular interests and objectives which made them part of a common nation. They should, therefore, unite to promote their common interests and achieve their common objectives, the basic of which were political independence, economic development, and removal of poverty. And so the liberal communalists, represented by the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim League and a wing of the Akali Dal negotiated with each other and often asked the National Congress to mediate between them and also urged the colonial regime to adjudicate on their demands. Today, the Akali Dal, the Muslim League in Kerala and Tamil Nadu and some of the Christian political groups in Kerala form the liberal communalists. Moreover, liberal communalism constituted a part of the ideological framework of many individuals, including many followers of the BJP.

After 1937 communalism entered a phase that may be described as extreme or Fascist communalism based on lies, hatred and violence. The extreme communalists argued that not only were the interests of Hindus and Muslims divergent, they were mutually antagonistic and therefore irreconcilable. Consequently one religious group was incited to hate another religious group. And so the phase of mutual hatred and malice and separatism on religious grounds began. Jinnah and the Muslim League now argued that India consisted of two nations—Hindus and Muslims—which could not coexist in the same state. V.D. Savarkar of the Hindu Mahasabha and M.S. Golwalkar of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, at the same time, argued that India consisted of one nation, the Hindu nation, with Muslims forming a foreign element in the land. (They held that Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains were Hindus and therefore part of the Hindu nation.) The Muslim communalists would divide the country formally into two states, the Hindu communalists would create a state in which the religious minorities would lead a subordinate, subservient, second-class existence.

After independence extreme communalism has been represented by the RSS and its front organizations, the extreme Sikh communalists, such as Bhinderanwale and his followers, and the Jamaat-i-Islami. Most of the members of the BJP are liberal communalists and not extreme communalists; however, its ideologues and organizers, trained by the RSS, belong to the latter category.

The struggle against communalism has to be based on the recognition of its widespread reach. Communalism has increasingly spread to all parts of the country, including the supposedly impregnable South, and to ever newer segments of the society. It is no longer confined to the middle classes and the upper castes. It has made headway among the lower castes, dalits, tribals and the working classes. It has assumed menacing proportions, threatening the very unity of the country.

Unfortunately, the socio-economic conditions in the country continue to favour communalism. The Indian economy has growth at less than the required rate, so that the problems of unemployment and inequality have grown, breeding frustration and social anxiety among the people. There has grown unhealthy competition for the available economic opportunities and resources. This is so, in particular, in the case of middle classes, increasingly engulfed by the all-embracing desire for modern consumer goods. Moreover, the ranks of the white-collar, job-seeking middle class have increased many fold with the spread of education, especially higher education, to the peasantry and the urban middle classes.

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COMMUNALISM AN IDEOLOGY

Communalism is basically an ideology. By ideology, I mean a belief system or inter-related assumptions through which polity or society are viewed. Communalism is, in other words, a way of looking at politics and society and politics organized around that ideology.

This might look like a rather simple statement of an obvious fact, but it has some deeper political and other implications and consequences. Once the ideological character of communalism is recognized, it follows that it is a long-term problem which would require intense and complex struggle on the political front and in the field of ideas. This struggle has to be a prolonged task—it has to be a long haul. Ad hocism won't do. The secular forces have to evolve a long-term strategy to combat communalism. This they have failed to do so far. We have also to grasp that communal beliefs and elements of communal ideology, common among the people today, are the result of the existence, inculcation and spread of communal ideology among them for the last hundred years or more. Communalism cannot be opposed without liquidating this heritage.

Also, the communal leaders and ideologues are primarily interested in spreading the communal belief system or ways of thought, that is ideology. Other aspects of communal activity are secondary and follow from the basic communal ideology.

Communal ideology has, therefore, to be consciously combated. No automatic results follow in this area because of other indirect steps. The nationalists believed in the 1930s and 1940s that the growth of the anti-imperialist struggle against British rule would indirectly and automatically weaken and get rid of communalism and inculcate a secular outlook. The leftists—the socialist party, communists, Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose—believed for decades that class struggle and mass movements around economic and social issues would have the same result even more efficaciously. After 1947, many, including Nehru, believed that economic development, especially industrialization, the spread of education, the progress of science and technology, and experience of democratic functioning would gradually weaken communal thinking and lead to the formation and growth of secular consciousness. Similarly, many on the Left have continued to rely on the struggle for social transformation to achieve this result. Consequently, there was a general tendency on the part of secular forces to neglect direct ideological struggle against communalism. Also, therefore, little attention was paid to the content of education or to the spread of scientific temper and a secular nationalist outlook among the mass of the people.

The fact, however, is that once communal ideology has emerged in a crystallized form and spread widely, it will abate and disappear only if a conscious struggle at the level of ideas—an ideological struggle—is waged against it and secularism actively promoted in the minds of the people.

Communalism will not go away on its own, whatever other steps such as industrialization and spread of education are taken.

This is particularly so in a democracy. Society is communalized through ideas and not through the police or the bureaucracy. In a democracy, it is not easy to ban communal parties and groups even if it is provided in the Constitution, since they do not overtly or openly claim to be communal but are covertly communal. They cannot be prevented from growing politically and coming to power once the people are communalized and vote for them. Even basically secular political parties betray weakness and opportunism when faced with a growing communalized opinion.

Similarly, communalization of the police and bureaucracy in recent years is not the result of executive fiat or direction but a response to what is happening in society. If society is communalized, then the police, bureaucracy and other instruments of the state are likely to follow suit.

A major weakness in the face of communalism, which has continued since the 1930s and through the post-independence period, has been the failure to confront communalism at the ideological-political plane and educate the people about its reality. Even when communalism has been opposed it has been opposed sporadically—in fits and starts or on a hand to mouth basis. The neglect of an active and direct ideological struggle against it has been a major factor in the growth of communalism in recent years, for the ideological terrain has been left to the communalists. As pointed out earlier, communalism is basically an ideology, which has, therefore, to be primarily opposed as such. Yet this task has been neglected. Secular Governments and the secular-minded persons and parties wake up when a major communal riot breaks out, but go back to apathy and neglect as soon as the riot-conjuncture is over, ignoring the fact that the riot was the consequence of the prior spread of communal ideology and the communalization of the people. We have also witnessed this after the Gujarat communal carnage.

To see communalism as an ideology also means that mere sermons, though needed, on communal harmony or the brotherhood of human kind, our glorious secular traditions, etc., will not do. Nor will tokenism or mere symbolic gestures, newspaper statements, TV interviews, or organization of seminars, though essential, do. These have not been very fruitful even in the past when far greater men and women than those of today practiced them. Such secular activity is easily 'digested' by the communalists. What has been, and is, needed is the concrete exposure of communalism and communal idéology and exposition of secularism.

It is an astonishing fact of the last 50 years that despite so much talk of secularism and anti-communalism, not a single all India movement or a mass campaign against communalism (or caste oppression and casteism) has been organized. The last time communalism was confronted on a mass ideological level was in 1951-52 when Nehru made it one of the basic issues of his election campaign.

Not that the need for an ideological struggle against communalism was not felt. In their public pronouncements as well as their private conversations and correspondence, Nehru and Indira Gandhi, as also other secular political leaders, constantly stressed this need. Seeing the surge in communal violence in the late 1950s, Nehru set up the

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National Integration Council in 1961 to specifically deal with the communal problem at the ideological plane. The Council, however, remained, and has remained to this day, a merely decorative forum. The BJP Government had refused to even call its meeting.

On the other hand, many secular persons and parties have tended to ignore the ideological character of communalism. A good example of this was the manner in which the secular and socialist segments of the Janata Party (1977-79) permitted the Jan Sangh RSS segments of the party to penetrate and control the educational structures and government media, though in the end Chandra Shekhar, Madhu Limaye and some others did protest. Similarly, the secular allies of the BJP in the NDA had permitted the RSS-BJP segments of the Alliance to occupy all the ministries dealing with culture, education, youth affairs, and All India Radio and Doordarshan, and Home Affairs which deal with bureaucracy and intelligence services.

In fact, despite its total opposition to communalism (see Appendix) the basic failure of the national movement in countering it also lay in the ideological arena. Except for Gandhiji's personal campaign for Hindu-Muslim unity and communal harmony, the movement also failed to carry out a sustained mass campaign against communal thinking.

(A) THE MEANING OF STRUGGLE AGAINST COMMUNAL IDEOLOGY

What does the struggle against communal ideology mean? What does patient ideological education about communalism mean? It means bringing out the different elements that constitute communal ideology or belief system and educating the public about the real nature and content of communalism. Above all it means bringing home to the people the falsity of communal assumptions, communal logic and communal answers. It means enabling the people, through patient analysis, to see that what the communalists project as the societal problems are not the real problems, that communal analysis of society, culture, history and politics faulty and, consequently, what they put forward as answers are not the answers to real problems; that the communalists not only give the wrong answers, they also raise the wrong questions. Certainly, there are many things that are wrong in India and with the social condition of the Indian people, but the causation of these ills that the communalists provide is wrong, and so are the communal remedies of these ills. What the communalists diagnose as the disease is not the disease and the remedy they provide is not the remedy. The communalist either deceives others or deceives himself.

We have also to explain that there is no social truth in the communal definition of the interests of the people, that Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs or Christians did not, because of following a common religion, share common social, economic or political interests, that Hindus as Hindus and Muslims as Muslims do not share any common interests outside the religious field, though all of them, together, share common interests as Indians. Communalism does not even benefit the members of the religious community whose interests it claims to defend and promote. It is not even true that a communalist is merely a narrow-minded person who looks only to the interests of his own 'community' or co-religionists, rather than to the wider social interests. In fact, he does not represent any such interest either, for no such interests exist. In most cases. Communalism is the worst enemy of and harms those very people it claims to represent. It also has to be brought home to the people that the communalists use religion to 'mask', hide or disguise the non-religious interests of specific social and political groups, leaders and parties. For example, communalism and communal riots are often used to settle business rivalries as in Bhiwandi, Aligarh, Moradabad and Meerut or to acquire land for business purposes as in Jamshedpur when Muslims were ousted from land in the name of a temple and then shopping centres built there. The use of Ram Janmabhoomi slogan to garner votes for the BJP is discussed later.

Before we proceed further one major error has to be pointed out.

(B) DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COMMUNALISM AND COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

We must not confuse communalism with communal violence. Communal ideology leads in many cases to communal violence and riots. But the former is primary and the cause, the latter, i.e., violence, is the consequence. Rioting, looting and killing and other forms of communal violence are contingent or conjunctural forms of communal thinking. A communal riot or pogrom with the suddenness of its outbreak, its cruelty, viciousness, inhumanity, beastliness and barbarity, and its toll of many dead and large-scale destruction of property hits the headlines and compels us to pay attention. But, in fact, it is an episodic consequence of the prior spread of communal ideology, a concrete manifestation and product of the prior communalization of the people, of the poisoning of the people's minds through the spread of communal belief system, so that the pettiest of happenings sparks a communal outburst.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN VIEW THAT COMMUNAL IDEOLOGY CAN PREVAIL WITHOUT VIOLENCE BUT COMMUNAL VIOLENCE CAN SELDOM TAKE PLACE WITHOUT PRIOR SPREAD OF COMMUNAL IDEOLOGY. No doubt, communal violence acts as a means of spreading communal ideology hot-house fashion. That is one reason the communalists take recourse to it—after all even they know that they cannot eliminate or do long-term serious harm to the other religious community through rioting and other forms of violence.

But under no circumstances should one equate communal violence and communal ideology. Communal violence isnot the heart of communalism. Communal violence is, of course, a consequence of the spread of communal thinking, but it is not the crux of the communal situation. Communal ideology can not only exist but grow and prevail for decades and yet not take the form of violence.

For example, in India, even though communal ideology was preached in a minor fashion, primarily through history teaching in schools from the 1830s, as a structured ideology, it started emerging in the 1870s and 1880s and gained strength from the beginning of the 20th century. Yet except for very short spurts of rioting in a few places—for example in 1893 in Pune and Kolkata—communal violence on a substantial scale was virtually absent for a long period. It began to occur on a large scale only in the 1920s, after 1922 to be precise. But this happened precisely because of the spread of communal ideology in the previous four decades. Similarly, communal violence was virtually absent during the period of the Second World War between 1939 and 1945 and yet this is precisely the period when communalism in India was growing by leaps and bounds.

I think another clear demonstration of our proposition is the politics of Punjab. It was believed in Punjab that the partition of 1947 had solved the communal problem because, in the pre-1947 Punjab as also in the partition riots, Hindu and Sikh communalists were on one side and Muslim communalists on the other. And so it was assumed that with the partition of Punjab and with the virtual disappearance of Muslims from the Indian part of Punjab communalism would die out there. But, in fact, Hindu and Sikh communalisms, refusing to die out, now began to target each other and grow very fast from 1947 onwards. Jawaharlal Nehru was also very conscious of this phenomenon and often wrote and spoke about it both in public and in private. I still remember, when in 1973-74 I went around several Punjab and Haryana universities and warned against the growing menace of communalism and the danger of communal violence in Punjab, many fellow-teachers and students said that I was brandishing a sword in the air and that violence between Hindus and Sikhs could not occur because they had *roti-beti ka rishta* (relationship of inter-dining and inter-marriage). But, in fact, communal violence of the most horrendous character did break out in Punjab after 1981 and in Delhi and whole of northern India after Indira Gandhi's assassination in October-November 1984. This violence was precisely a consequence of the spread of communal ideology in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and northern India since 1947.

I could go on giving examples of this close relationship between communal violence and the prior spread of communal ideology by citing the examples of riots in Moradabad, Meerut, Bangalore, Bombay, Bhiwandi, Bhagalpur, Jaipur and Lucknow. I could also point to other areas and places where no communal violence has occurred so far, but where communal ideology is constantly preparing the ground for future violence.

Similarly, Gujarat violence of February-March 2002 which horrified the entire nation was the consequence of the prior spread of communal ideology or way of thinking through BJP's and RSS's propaganda machinery, school textbooks, etc., for several years. The tragedy is that secular persons tend to get aroused only when communal violence occurs on a large-enough scale to make a big impact on our conscience, but to remain passive in the period when communal ideology is spreading, and to go back to apathy one communal violence subsides. This is also what happened in the case of Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid affair which was brewing since 1983 but was completely ignored by secular persons and forces till 1986 and, in fact, till 1989.

The difference between communal ideology and communal violence is crucial because the two have to be dealt with differently and have different relations with the state. Eradication of communal ideology is a long-term phenomenon. Communal violence requires an immediate answer; and that answer has to be the immediate and effective use of all the law and order instruments at the disposal of the state. The state alone can suppress communal violence and shorten the time-span of a riot as also reduce the damage it does to life and property. Secular persons must demand that the Government use state apparatuses—police, army, bureaucracy—ruthlessly and immediately to put down any communal violence or talk of violence and that it should declare its intention to do so before violence actually takes place. India has no choice but to become a hard state so far as communal violence is concerned. Moreover, in a multi-religious society, differences and disputes over religious issues are going to be there fore a long time to come. But it should be made clear that the Government and the people would not permit any violence to be organized around them.

The policy to be followed in this respect is the one recommended by Jawaharlal Nehru as the Prime Minister of India. He constantly urged the Chief Ministers and other administrators to take prompt administrative action against those who spread communal hatred and encouraged communal violence. 'The point is', he wrote to Chief Ministers in September 1956, 'that a crisis has to be met by immediate and effective action and usually the arrest of obvious offenders is the best preventive.' The public must be convinced that the Government would 'stand no nonsense in regard to communal troubles.' He was quite critical of the administrative steps adopted so far. 'We have been rather slow in this respect recently and allowed trouble to grow. Well known bad characters of the goonda type and notorious communal fanatics who spread poison from day to day are allowed to continue their mischievous activities without let or hindrance. When some actual trouble occurs, usually some fairly innocent people are arrested and the mischief-makers escape.'

Unfortunately, Nehru did not succeed in getting his declared policies implemented in practice. Hardly any instigator or perpetrator of communal violence was punished during the 1950s and 1960s or after.

Communal violence has to be immediately crushed not only because it represents barbarism, which no civilized state or society can tolerate, but also because its consequence as also its objectives is the spread of communal ideology in geometrical proportions. Communal violence forces even secular persons to organize self-defence on communal lines and to join hands with communal forces to defend their lives and property. It arouses in a flash all the hidden, passive communal elements in the personalities of the mass of the people. In fact, the major purpose of those who inspire and organize communal violence is not to reduce the number of the other religious community or genocide or to impoverish it through loss of property. This cannot be done till the state takes up the task a la'Nazi Germany. That is nearly impossible today. The purpose is to create situations which communalize the mass of the people.

Today, it seems, that organizers of communal violence are working towards another major objective: to force segregation on Hindus and Muslims so that persons belonging to a religion stop living in religiously-mixed localities and get to form and confined to separate parts of the cities and clusters of villages. The purpose, in particular, is to ghettoize the minorities as happened in Bombay after 1993, in Gujarat since 1980s and in other places wherever major riots have taken place. The ground is being prepared for creating hundreds of northern Irelands.

To sum up: communal violence is the consequence of the prior spread of communal ideology. Communal violence should be strongly dealt with by the state; but this should be followed by a long-term ideological struggle against communalism as a belief system.

(C) WHO ARE THE GUILTY?

In taking strong action, fire should be directed against the instigators and organizers of communal violence. They are the real criminals and not those who lift the weapons that kill and maim or carry the torch that burns down shops and houses. It is common knowledge that riots usually occur after the people have been subjected to intensive doses of provocative speeches and other forms of inflammatory propaganda that polarizes people along communal lines. A great deal of underground organization, gathering of weapons, etc. also precedes actual violence. Yet no action even under the existing laws is taken against these real enemies of society.

(D) NEED FOR STRONG STATE ACTION

State inactivity, for various reasons, in the face of communal violence has played a major role in the spread of communal violence in various parts of India. Since Nehru's time, the state administrations have seldom acted in time and with the needed effective force in case of communal violence. This has inevitably encouraged communal forces. On the other hand, the example of CPI(M)-run West Bengal, especially in 1984 and 1992-93, shows that effective and immediate administrative action can successfully scotch communal violence. In fact, the very threat of communal violence would be lessened if it was made clear to all that the Government was both strong and impartial and was determined to put down at any cost communal violence or any talk of communal violence. The government should give confidence to the people and put fear in the hearts and minds of the potential perpetrators and organizers of communal violence. In fact, this fear or the idea that communalism 'shall not pass' should be seen as an important part of the long-term ideological struggle against communalism.

(E) COMMUNAL VIOLENCE AND THE STATE APPARATUS

This also points to the need for sturdy secular police and officials. Unfortunately, the state apparatuses, from the top to the bottom, have been growing lax in their treatment of communal violence. After all, the state alone possess the instruments to successfully counter communal violence. Yet, increasingly the high standards set by the founding fathers of the nation have been lowered over time and even given the go by. Noting that in the face of communal violence, a great deal depends on the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police, Jawaharlal Nehru advised the Chief Ministers (1 October 1950), 'If they are competent and right minded, nothing wrong is likely to happen. But if they are not competent, or if they temporize with communal or anti-social elements then trouble is bound to come some time or the other. I think it would be a safe policy to put a black mark in the record of every district officer when a communal incident takes place and to inform him of this.' He pointed out that, in this respect, 'the best of excuses are not good enough, just as all the reasons in the world which a defeated General may advance for his defeat are not good enough.'

Moreover, communalists and communal ideology have been over the years, in fact since the 1930s, penetrating the state apparatuses. This penetration has been speeded up since the 1960s. Many of the officials at different levels betray communal tendencies and encourage communal forces overtly or covertly. In some cases, as for example the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) in Moradabad, Bombay 1992-93 and Gujarat in February-March 2002, the police directly participated in communal violence against the minorities. In others, as in Bhagalpur and Delhi in 1984 and Punjab after 1981, they tend to remain passive spectators of communal looting and killings. A major reason for the growth of communal violence since 1964 has been the gradual communalization of the police in many parts of the country.

This penetration of communalism and communal ideology has to be checked and eliminated. The principle of the non-politicization of the police, bureaucracy, and the armed forces is sound, but not where inculcation of basic human values such as democracy, civil liberties, secularism and elimination of caste oppression, enshrined in our Constitution as a legacy of our freedom struggle, are concerned.

A saving feature till recently has been the absence of active state support to communal ideology and communal forces and communal violence. This is no longer true as was seen from the examples of the role of the BJP government in Gujarat killings of February-March 2002 and the role of the BJP governments at the Centre and in the states in communalizing education and eulogizing communal leaders such as V.D. Savarkar and Hedgewar.

(F) COMMUNALISM AND EDUCATION

Once communalism is seen as an ideology, it becomes clear that it cannot be suppressed by force, for no ideology can be suppressed by force or through administrative bans, etc. Ideology has to be overcome at the level of ideas. While, as argued above in section B, communal violence or its advocacy can and must be put down only by the state, the eradication of communalism is the task not only of the state but also, even more so, of political parties, intellectuals and cultural workers—writers, artists, journalists and professionals, teachers especially in rural areas, small town lawyers and doctors, voluntary groups, trade unions, kisan sabhas, youth organizations, etc.

Communalism is spread on a mass scale not only by mass ideological work by communal political parties and communal organizations such as the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Jamaat-i-Islami and Akali Dal but also through schools, colleges, places of worship and above all through socialization and word of mouth in the family, social gatherings, etc. Communalism is then to be fought, above all, in the family, mohallas, schools and colleges, rural gatherings, factories, and banks, government offices, and other places of work, and, in fact, wherever people gather in groups. It is this task which has been neglected since 1948.

In this respect, the role of education and the Press is crucial. The spread of literacy and education was expected to play a major role in weaning people away from communalism and casteism and secularizing their minds. But the educational system, which both at the school and college levels, has been permeated with communal and irrational ideas and the printed word through the Press have been, and are being, used to inculcate and spread communalism, casteism and regional chauvinism. The spread of education has been accompanied by the growth of communalism because of the communal content of education, especially in northern and western India. There has also been tremendous proliferation and growth of communal newspapers and journals, especially in Indian languages and more recently in some of the TV channels. Consequently, the spread of literacy and education has resulted in the further spread of communal ideology rather than its elimination. Previously, illiteracy and the traditional culture of the masses, especially the rural people, protected them from the reach of communal ideology and kept communalism in the main as a middle class phenomenon. On the other hand, in the last 30 years or so, there has been a proliferation of communal magazines, cartoons strips, etc., meant for the consumption of children and neo-literate adults. Reorientation both of education and the Press in this regard is an urgent necessity. Nor should the freedom of the Press include the freedom to spread communal ideas.

As we have repeatedly pointed out, IF SOCIETY IS COMMUNALIZED, THEN POLITICS OR THE POLICE AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE ARE LIKELY TO FOLLOW SUIT. And the beginning in de-communalizing society or inculcating secular and other positive values among the people has to be at the schooling stage. Hence also the significance of the school textbooks. At the school level, along with the teacher, the young person is largely dependent on a textbook. Nor can he or she, except in exceptional cases, take recourse to a multiplicity of text books. The teacher and the textbook are both the repository of knowledge and the most important influences on the minds of the young people. The significance of schooling in this respect is fully recognized by the communalists. That is why tinkering with school textbooks is one agenda to which communal governments and organizations, whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, firmly adhere to.

(G) COMMUNALISM AND TEACHING OF HISTORY

Teaching of Indian history in our schools and colleges is a special case in this respect for it has, along with its popular versions purveyed through informal channels, a great deal to do with the spread of communalism in India in the last 100 years or more. One of the pillars of communal belief system, in fact its core, is the communal interpretation of Indian history. An objective, scientific history would undermine the basic structure and content of communalism as an ideology.

Communal interpretation of history is widely prevalent as also dangerous precisely because we have all been subjected to it since our childhood through various channels, including oral communication, and through socialization in the family, school and the mohalla. The result is that all of us have imbibed elements of it, though often we are not aware of it. For example, most of us have learnt to think of the ancient period of Indian history as a period of glory and greatness, and of the medieval period as one of decay and decline.

Similarly, much before the Muslim League or V.D. Savarkar created the two nation theory, which led to the partition of the country, the British colonial writers and their followers, the communal writers, had done so. They had created and propagated the view that the Indian nation meant the Hindu nation and that the rule by medieval Muslim rulers was 'foreign rule'. How could the rule by Indian rulers, who happened to practice Islam as religion, be foreign? Because, came the answer, they were Muslims who were by definition treated as foreigners. Thus a major source of the spread of communalism and of the Partition lay in the communal interpretation of history, first by the British authors and then, following them, by Hindu and Muslim communal writers.

One of the problems that the Hindu communalists faced was: how to create fear psychosis among Hindus who constituted a majority of the population. The Muslim communalists did so by referring to the minority status of the Muslims. The Hindu communalists did so by adopting the view, carefully propagated by the colonial rulers, that Hindus were oppressed, subjugated, maltreated and subjected to tyranny by the Muslim rulers during the medieval period, that instead of representing a period of economic development and cultural synthesis and development in arts, religion and literature, the medieval period represented decline and degeneration, and that the British had replaced a barbaric foreign and inhuman rule with a humane and civilized foreign rule. The Muslims could, therefore, do so again.

History was thus used to rubbish all Muslims and create hatred and fear of Muslims among Hindus. The Muslim communalists did not lag behind. They too, following the colonial rulers and writers, declared that rule by Muslim Kings was Muslim rule and that all Muslims constituted the ruling class in the medieval period!

The communalist, whether Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh, constantly praised rulers belonging to his 'community' and condemned or denigrated those belonging to other 'communities'. Real of fictitious incidents were narrated and reiterated to prove this point. And, then, by transfer, the character of the rulers was said to reflect the inherent character of the 'communities', to which they belonged.

The role of the history textbooks in the spread of communalism and the poisoning of young minds was recognized by the leaders of the national movement. Gandhiji, for example, wrote: 'Communal harmony could not be permanently established in our country so long as highly distorted versions of history were being taught in her schools and colleges, through history books.' Lajpat Rai, writing about his childhood said, in his autobiography: "At that time a book on Indian history called *Waqiat-i-Hind* used to be taught at Government schools. That book created in me the feeling that Mussalmans had subjected the Hindus to great tyranny. Gradually the respect for Islam that I had acquired from early training began to change into hatred because of study of *Waqiat-i-Hind*. The Foreword to the 'Report of the Kanpur Riots Enquiry Committee', appointed by Indian National Congress, pointed out in 1932that the communal view of medieval history books 'is playing a considerable part in estranging the two communities' and added: "We consider, therefore, that an attempt to remove historical misconceptions is the first and the most indispensable step in the real solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem." Similarly, going into the causes of the resurgent communal and linguistic-chauinist riots in different parts of the country during 1959-61, the newly constituted National Integration Council came to the conclusion (in

1961) that the communal and other biases in the existing school history textbooks and their poor quality was in part responsible for the riots. The Council asked the Ministry of Education and the National Council of Educational Research and Training to get model textbooks written on the basis of existing advanced historical research. On the other hand, the then BJP government at the centre had consciously removed these model textbooks and replaced them with new textbooks which reproduce all the communal prejudices of the colonial and communal writers of the pre-1947 colonial era. This is because, as pointed out earlier, communal interpretation of Indian history forms the core of Hindu communal ideology in India.

(H) IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE AMONG SECULAR PERSONS

We should also be clear as to which are the target groups of the ideological struggle against communalism. This struggle has to reach out to all sections of the people, that is, not only to those who are communal minded and supporters of the communal parties and groups, but also to those who are basically secular and support secular parties and groups.

In periods of crisis, especially when communal violence occurs or communal tension prevails, communalism burgeons forth precisely because secular persons start falling prey to it. This is because communal belief system consists of many elements. Some of these elements can exist in the thinking of even basically secular persons. At different levels, elements of communalism have, over decades, penetrated our people's minds, though often subconsciously. Existence of some of these elements does not make a person a communalist. It would be wrong to brand or treat such persons as communalists. But these communal elements do open the secular personality to communal influences. There is the grave danger that if these elements are not taken note of, opposed and eliminated in normal times, they will grow in a situation of crisis and engulf the personality of a secular-minded person. It is to these elements in basically secular persons that communal parties and groups try to appeal.

(I) IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE AND THE COMMUNAL IDEOLOGUES

We have, of course, to carry out intensive ideological work among those who have fallen prey to communalism. But while doing so, a sharp distinction has to be made between communal leaders and ideologues and their communal followers. The latter should be neither ridiculed nor scorned and abused. They are to be treated not as villains but as victims, who have been misled by communalism and whose social condition has propelled them in that direction. They have to be helped in a friendly and patient manner to overcome their communal thinking and prejudices, i.e., the communal elements in their personalities. They are to be treated the way we treat patients with a virus. We don't condemn them; we help them get rid of their virus. We should carry on a dialogue with them; we should let them ask all sorts of questions; let them express their communal concerns and anxieties and give vent to their anger. We should try to understand what bothers them.

The ideologues and leaders of communalism are, on the other hand, the generators and conscious carriers and propagators of the communal germs and are, therefore, to be seen and branded as the enemies of society and to be given no quarter. Even in case of a riot, it is those who motivate and instigate the rioters, and not those who participate in them, who are the really guilty. We, however, do the very opposite. While the ideologues and leaders are treated with kid gloves and more often dealt with as respectable persons, their followers—those who act at their behest or who derive their inspiration from them—are condemned and treated as anti-social elements for participating in communal riots etc. In other words, those who generate and propagate the ideology that leads to communal riots escape not only legal punishment but also social disapproval and condemnation, while their followers—their victims so to speak—pay the price, sometimes with their lives.

This dichotomy was witnessed in the treatment of the Gujarat carnage by the media. Those who killed and looted were strongly condemned and exemplary action demanded against them, but action against those who had preached and propagated communal hatred prior to the carnage was seldom demanded. Even Modi was criticized for not taking adequate action against, or even collaborating with, the rioters, but not for having generated in the previous months and years the atmosphere of communal hatred which had led tribals, urban poor and the middle classes to participate actively in the carnage. And not one question was raised as to who had communalized Narsi Mehta's, Gandhi's, and Morarji Desai's Gujarat.

It is important in this respect to look into the genesis of a communal riot, to study how a communal riot breaks out. The immediate cause of a riot is often petty: an inter-religious marriage; teasing a girl of the other community; quarrel between two shopkeepers or a shopkeeper and a customer; a property dispute or business rivalry. The excuse can be serious: a communal killing as at Godhra. Agent provocateurs can also play a role. A riot can be triggered by a baseless rumour. But what really transforms all these 'causes' into a riot is the prevalence of the atmosphere of fear, suspicion, hatred and tension. This atmosphere is created over a longish period of time precisely by the propagation of communal ideology by the communal leaders and ideologues, who need not, however, participate in or even directly precipitate, a riot. To prevent a riot, it is the building up of communal tension and atmosphere of fear and suspicion and hatred that has to be avoided. We will have more to say on this in section K below.

(J) WHAT IS A COMMUNAL PARTY?

Once we see communalism as an ideology, the definition of a communal party also gets better grounded. Communal parties and groups are those that are *structured around communal ideology*. Take away the communal ideology or make them abandon it and nothing is left of them. The party or group disintegrates. It is this which was seen clearly by the Muslim League leadership and Mohammed Ali Jinnah in 1937 when they saw that, all their communal demands having been met by the Communal Award by the colonial government, either they had to increase the dose of communal ideology and religion-based militancy or face the disintegration of the Muslim League and Muslim communalism. They chose the former course. The Hindu Mahasabha faced the same choice at the same time as it faced virtual extinction because of the Congress adopting a firm anti-communal approach. Instead of disbanding, it went over from Madan Mohan Malaviya's liberal-nationalist communalism to V.D. Savarkar's and Moonje's extreme communalism. Earlier, Dr. Hedgewar had realized that Malaviya and Lajpat Rai were moving towards giving up their liberal communalism and had, therefore, founded the RSS in the late 1920s.

The same dilemma was faced by the Akali leadership in 1981 after they lost the elections in Punjab. They could not win in Punjab as a Sikh communal party because of the large Hindu population and the strong secular tradition among the Sikhs. But the Akalis could also not survive as a viable party if they gave up communalism for they had no alternative socio-economic and political programme to offer. The choice was either to die out as a communal party or to escalate the level of communalism in Punjab. They chose the latter course. We should not forget that it was the so-called moderate leadership which gave the slogan that there was a genocide against Sikhs or that the Sikh religion was in danger in India or which passed the Anandpur Sahib resolution. And all this was done during 1982-83, much before the Operation Blue Star or the heinous riots of 1984.

Consequently, it is futile to talk of reforming the BJP in a secular direction, as many had tried to do in 1977-78 in case of the Jan Sangh, the earlier incarnation of the BJP, or as many of the BJP's NDA allies believed they could do, or to ask the RSS to give up its anti-minority outlook, or to suggest that minus communalism the BJP would be 'alright'. This is to ignore the centrality of communal ideology in a communal party. The BJP minus communalism would not be 'alright'; it would be politically a big zero—and the BJP leaders know it. They know that even the effort to disguise their communal ideology after they dissolved the Jan Sangh and joined the Janata Party weakened their organization. They found out that they can sugar-coat the pill of communal ideology but they cannot function without it. In other words, the raison d'etre—the reason for the existence—of a communal party is communal ideology. Those who try to compromise, or 'settle', with communal parties and groups should know that they are dealing with parties rooted in communal ideology and not mere political operators.

The socialist component of the Janata Party found out the truth of this fact when they could not persuade the ex-Jan Sangh members, led by Atal Behari Vajpayee and L.K. Advani, to break organizational links with the RSS even if maintaining this link led to the disintegration of the Janata Party and the fall of the Janata government. The left parties and Janata Dal too found this out during September and October 1990, when their 10 month efforts to cohabit with and thus soften up the mild mannered L.K. Advani proved of no avail, and when it came to the crunch, Advani and the BJP preferred to earn the wrath of the friendly parties and intellectuals rather than weaken their political base in communalism and among their communal-minded supporters.

Once we see communalism as an ideology, we must learn not to associate a communal party with any specific programme or policies. Communal ideology and not specific policies lie at the heart of a communal party. The BJP has, for example, for the time being put on hold the issues of a Common Civil Code or abrogation of Article 370, or even construction of a temple in Ayodhya on the spot where the

Babri Mosque stood before it was demolished. It also blows hot and cold on its relations with Pakistan. But it vigorously and relentlessly pursued its ideological agenda through such educational and academic bodies as The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Institute of Advanced Study at Shimla, University Grants Commission (UGC). Not able to understand this, the secular parties, especially BJP's NDA allies, floundered in their critique of the BJP government.

(K) COMMUNAL IDEOLOGY AND COMMUNAL LEADERS

We may also keep in view that ideologies have a logic of their own. Once any ideology—in this case communal ideology—is born and spreads and prevails for a long enough period, it acquires a life and force of its own. Sometimes it becomes autonomous even of its proponents, not even its ideologues can go against its logic. Let me give an example. After 1937, Jinnah propagated an extreme, near Fascist, version of communalism based on the cry of Islam in danger and demanded the creation of Pakistan as an Islamic state because Muslims formed a separate nation from Hindus. Having created Pakistan, he thought he would go back to his pre-1937 years. And so he declared on 13 August 1947 in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly that from now on Pakistan would be a modern state where there would be no distinction or discrimination among citizens of Pakistan on grounds of religion. But communal ideology could not be shed so easily. It was, and is, a *jinn* which would not go back into the bottle. It was not independent even of Jinnah's will. It was to become and remain Pakistan's dominating ideology ever since. It is perhaps correct that Jinnah had no communal hatred in him. He was a cultured, suave and civilized person. But once he took recourse to an extreme, hatred-ridden, fascist version of communal ideology, he became as much its prisoner as his ardent followers. And even if, having used it to get into power, he was willing to abandon it, those on whose backs he had ridden to power would not do so. Punjab is another good example of the proposition that once one holds and propagates communal ideology, the consequences are not in one's hands. The Hindu and Sikh communalists there seldom preached hatred against one another. They tried to keep their communalism within the bounds of what has come to be described as moderation. But hatred and extreme communalism and violence did finally come.

I point this out because when BJP came to power I heard many suggest that Atal Behari Vajpayee is a sober, soft spoken and decent person and that the BJP has, under his leadership, become humanized and is now less communal especially as it is learning to function in a coalition government. In the nineties of the last century, we used to hear the same argument with regard to L.K. Advani. This view is not only facile but dangerous because leaders and parties cannot be separated from the ideology with which they operate among the masses. This is evident from Advani's Rath Yatra in 1990 and his and Vajpayee's ideological stand at crucial moments, especially with regard to Modi and the Gujarat carnage and Murli Manohar Joshi's implementation of BJP's policy of communalization of education. The fact is that because of its ideological character, communalism should neither be seen as a mere lust for power nor be evaluated in terms of the personalities of its leaders.

(L) DO NOT MAKE COMMUNALISM RESPECTABLE

There are several other dos and don'ts regarding communalism that follow from our analysis. Under no circumstances should one, under one garb or another, and especially by allying or associating with a communal party, make communalism respectable and legitimize it. Once communalism is made respectable, all talk of ideological campaign against it is seen by the people as hypocritical and makes little impact on them. A major contribution of the Indian national movement and post-independence leadership has been that even while failing to extirpate communalism, the word communalism has become a dirty word—it has acquired a bad odour. That odour should stay. Today even the communalists are shy of describing themselves as such. A major step towards secular politics would be for all secular parties to avow that they would not ally, overtly or covertly, directly or indirectly through a proxy, with any communal group or party, whether the BJP, Shiv Sena, Muslim League or Akali Dal. A second step would be for secular parties to rid themselves of all individuals and groups who think and act communally even while professing adherence to secularism.

Unfortunately, the spectrum of Indian politics which shunned communalism in toto has been gradually getting narrowed down. It is not only in corruption and the nexus between politicians, bureaucracy and goonda-gangster elements that the general degeneration of Indian politics has been finding expression. It also expresses itself in a soft approach towards Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communalisms. The intellectual flabbiness towards communalism also takes the form of equating communal parties with basically secular parties which, however, retreat in the face of communalism.

This flabbiness and opportunism are in deep contrast with the sturdy approach of a Jawaharlal Nehru or Mahatma Gandhi. Nehru, for example, would make no compromise with communalism, whatever the electoral consequences. 'So far as I am concerned', he was to declare in 1954, 'I am prepared to lose every election in India but to give no quarter to communalism or casteism.'

(M) OPPORTUNISM TOWARDS COMMUNALISM

There exists, and has existed for quite some time, a great deal of opportunism towards communalism and communal parties. This opportunism takes the form of compromising with, or failing to take a stand on, or even conniving at and joining forces with, the communalists. This opportunism has to be critiqued, but critiqued as opportunism. The opportunists must not be equated with the communalists. They have to be distinguished from the communalists because they are not rooted in communal ideology—because communal ideology is not basic to their existence. On the other hand, the BJP is communal because of its moorings in communal ideology and because its steel-frame is provided by the RSS. Communal parties and groups are interested in whipping up communal passions, while the secular-opportunist parties tend to vacillate and retreat in the face

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of communal onslaught. This retreat assumes abject proportions when faced with electoral loss or communal violence. Still, despite the crass opportunism of many of them, most of the Indian political parties and intellectuals—whether of the right, centre of left—have themselves not been communal. This has prevented the rapid growth of communalism and has kept India basically secular.

The differentiation between communal and secular-opportunist parties is also necessary because different types of critique have to be made of the two types of parties. The opportunists are to be critiqued for compromising with, or failing to take a stand on, the communalists, while the communalists are to be critiqued for being communal.

Every effort has also to be made to separate the opportunists from the communalists and to persuade and pressurize them to give up their opportunism. They must not be 'handed over' to the communalists for all time to come. This was the error made by the German Communists and the Socialists when they failed to differentiate between the Nazis and non-Nazis in Germany in 1931-3 and concentrated on discrediting and attacking each other.

(N) CONGRESS AND COMMUNALISM

This also answers the question: who are to carry on the anti-communal struggle in our country? Obviously, all the secular parties, groups and individuals. But, clearly, at the core of this struggle has to be the Congress which is the main secular political force in the country. Undoubtedly, the weaknesses in the Congress policies or the policies of the Congress-led state governments or the Central government should be pointed out. Whenever the Congress has adopted or adopts an opportunistic approach towards communalism of different varieties, it should be subjected to a principled critique. Also, the Congress itself should lead in introspection. At the same time, it is suicidal to talk of the Congress being a party of 'soft Hindutva' or the ideological camp follower of the BJP or playing the communal card. The hard fact is that despite its many weaknesses, the Congress is not only not rooted in communal ideology, it is firmly rooted in a secular ideology and it bases its appeal to the people on secularism and secular values. In fact, to put the Congress in the communal camp or to talk of its following 'soft Hindutva' or 'soft communalism' is tantamount to giving respectability to the BJP and even legitimizing it. In reality it is the difference between Togadia and Vajpayee which can be described as the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' communalism.

(O) INDIAN STATE AND COMMUNALISM

A major saving feature of the Indian situation till recent years was the absence of state support to communal ideology and communal forces. The state can through its myriad channels, from the educational system to the mass media under its control, and through administrative measures promote communal ideology or promote ideological struggle against it. The historical experience of fascism during the inter-war period (1919-1939) and of communalism in Pakistan and Bangladesh indicates that communal-type movements cannot come to power without the active connivance of the state and state apparatuses. That is why both in and out of power the communalists try to penetrate state apparatuses and capture state power by posturing as believers in secularism and democracy.

Despite a degree of some opportunism and vacillations, the Indian state and its organs and the media at its command and the educational system have in the past on the whole functioned within a secular framework. This positive feature is being undermined today, especially in the educational field and other cultural and intellectual areas which are under the control of the Ministry of Human Resource Development and in states under the control of communal parties.

Yet the situation is not yet out of control, despite Gujarat's example. India is still a federal democracy. Many state governments are under the control of secular parties. Moreover, popular secular pressure can check and prevent even the government at the centre from using its instruments to promote communalism. The media can, and does, also play a positive role in this regard. It is, therefore, necessary to constantly educate, organize and mobilize public opinion at different levels for the purpose. The communalists should also be deprived of their control over state power as soon as possible. The penetration of state apparatuses by the communalists and communal ideology has also to be exposed, checked and eliminated.

(P) OTHER MEANS OF PROMOTING COMMUNAL HARMONY

Ideological struggle against communalism does not mean that the other means that the national movement, especially Gandhiji, used to promote communal harmony and check the spread of communal hatred and violence are not to be used. They can play a significant role in doing so. Only, they are not sufficient for the purpose. For example:

i. Setting up peace brigades and peace committees in areas where communal peace is threatened or violence takes place.

ii. Stressing the common humanity of the followers of all religious faiths, that no religion preaches hatred; that different religions are branches of the one great Religion and one God; that religious leaders and persons known for their piety can play a great role in this respect.

iii. Emphasizing the spirit of unity in diversity.

iv. Emphasizing the composite character of Indian culture and common ways of living at the level both of elites and the common people.

v. Encourage joint celebration by all Indians to whichever religion they might belong of joint functions such as Holi, Diwali, Dussehra, Durga Puja, Rakhi, Christmas, Id-ul-Fitr, and Muharram as also regional and local festivals such as Onam and Baisakhi, which were traditionally celebrated together by the poor as well as the rich belonging to different religions. Even when there and other festivals were not celebrated together, they were shared with the neighbours. People should be also encouraged to share, as they have done for centuries, common literary and oral traditions based on common heroes and heroines or on common religious characters, symbols and myths.

3

STRUGGLE AGAINST ALL COMMUNALISMS

There is another advantage in seeing communalism as an ideology or belief system. We do not then distinguish one communalism from another; all communalisms are seen as varieties of the same communal ideology. In fact, communalism is a single ideology with Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, or Christian variants or manifestations. All of these variants of communalisms have to be opposed simultaneously. It is not possible to deal successfully with communal ideology by critiquing only one of its manifestations. We do not fight against Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian communalism, but communalism as such and its different manifestations. In other words, it is necessary to wage a simultaneous struggle against all communalisms.

This is also because the different forms of communalism feed on each other; each claims to be a reaction to or backlash of the other. Consequently, any strengthening of one communalism strengthens the others.

This also means that secular parties should refuse to ally, overtly or covertly, openly or secretly, with any communal group or party, for example the BJP, Shiv Sena, Muslim League or Akali Dal. More concretely, in our present situation, it means that secular parties or groups or individuals should, while opposing Hindu communalism, refuse to line up behind Muslim or Sikh communalism.

A second step would be for secular parties to rid themselves of all individuals and groups, who think and act communally even while professing adherence to secularism, the way the Indian National Congress did in 1938.

Two further points may be made in this respect. Communalism should not be confused with the question of the defence of minorities. In specific historical situations, minorities can suffer from several disabilities, deprivations and discriminations and the consequent anxieties and fears. A part of the appeal of minority communalism lies in their claim to allay these anxieties and fears. I believe that Sikhs and Christians have no ground for complaint on this score in today's India. But Muslims certainly do, though India has much to be proud of in its treatment of minorities. Some of the disabilities of Muslims are self imposed or historical—most Muslims were artisans and poor peasants even in medieval and colonial India and shunned trade and money lending; they lagged behind in education and industry in colonial India: and a large number of middle and upper class Muslims, especially in North India, migrated to Pakistan during and after 1947. But some of the disabilities result from the wide prevalence of social prejudices and Hindu communalism, especially among sections of traders, industrialists and bureaucrats. But the remedy to their problems does not lie in Muslim communalism; and those who encourage Muslim communalism to feather their own electoral nests are no friends of Muslims. The remedy to the disabilities and discriminations from which Muslims suffer lies in all secular persons and political forces struggling together for their removal.

A part of the appeal of Muslim communalism lies in its claim to remove these disabilities and to allay the fears and anxieties of the Muslims. The secular forces have to find out and concretely analyze the genuine sources of these fears and anxieties, put forth and struggle for the real ways of removing them, redressing the social situation, and protecting the minorities, and simultaneously to bring out the falsity of communal premises and promises. The secular forces have also to take such steps as initiating the process of weeding out the hard core communalists from the police, CRPF, etc. and the bureaucracy and educating all organs of the government in the values of secularism. For example, one reason why a large number of Muslim students at Aligarh are misled by Jamaat-i-Islami and other communal organizations lies in the failure of the Indian people and secular forces to fight successfully against the large-scale discrimination to which middle class Muslim youths are subjected in employment in the Government, in schools and colleges and in private business concerns and to protect Muslim masses and businessmen from attacks on their life and property during riots, etc.

Secular forces also must oppose segregation and ghettoization that is being forced upon Muslims.

However, this does not mean that minority communalism should be ignored or a soft and tolerant attitude adopted towards it. The wide spread notion that somehow minority communalism is not such a dangerous phenomenon is wholly wrong. Minority communalism has to be opposed as strongly as majority communalism. Both are dangerous— and not only to the people or nation as a whole but also to those the communalists claim to serve. It is just not true that the communalists fight for and favour the religious community they claim to represent. In fact they are worst enemies of the community they claim to represent.

The dangers of majority communalism are obvious. Communalism can become a dominant force in India only in its majority form. In a democracy, majority communalism can acquire power far beyond that of any minority communalism. It can also pass itself off as nationalism. Majority communalism alone can impose fascism. And, of course, the main victims of fascism would be Hindus precisely because they constitute the majority of the Indian people. Representing irrationality, hatred, in— tolerance and obscurantism, communalism's success would also mark a deep break with the centuries-old culture, traditions, humanity and value system of the Indian people. We should, in this respect, learn from the history of other people and ask who were the chief victims of fascism. Clearly, in Italy the Italians, in Japan the Japanese and in Germany the Germans as a whole and not merely the Jews among them. It has, therefore, to be realized that just as before 1947 the main damage to national unity was inflicted by Muslim communalism, so after 1947 it is Hindu communalism which poses the main threat to India's unity and democracy.

But minority communalism is no less a negative force in Indian politics and society; and this for three reasons. First, minority communalism is highly injurious both to the minority concerned and to India as a whole. It inevitably and in the long run leads to separatism or separatist sentiments as in pre-1947 India and in Punjab in the 1980s and 1990s.

Second, communalism hands over a minority to communal leaders whose politics are invariably harmful to the long-term interests of the members of the minority concerned. Muslim communalism became a major force in India before 1947—and was even successful in its own terms. But the price of this success is still being paid by Muslims of the sub-continent, whether they live in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. The main victims of Sikh communalism have been Sikhs not only after 1981 but also earlier. Nor is this conclusion a historical afterthought. Jawaharlal Nehru had, with great foresight, repeatedly warned of this consequence of minority communalism. Writing to Khaliquzzaman in July 1937, he had exclaimed: 'Do you not see that this communal policy which the Muslim League here has fathered is a policy more injurious to the Muslims of India than anything that a majority could do would be. It is a doomed policy both from the point of view of the community and the larger world'. Similarly, in December 1954, referring to the intense communalism of the Akali Dal, he wrote: "If these ideas spread, India will no doubt suffer, but the Sikhs will obviously suffer more." Thus, if Hindu communalists are not 'pro-Hindu', Muslim communalists not 'pro-Muslim' and Sikh communalists not 'pro-Sikh', clearly majority communalism does not in any way benefit the minority. There is also, then no reason to feel that opposing or criticizing minority communalism will 'hurt' the minority.

Third, far from successfully defending minority interests, minority communalism tends to feed and promote majority Hindu communalism. Laxness towards minority communalism—that is unless secularists are seen to be struggling against it —makes the struggle against majority communalism difficult and the latter has a tendency to burgeon forth. No critique of Hindu communalism will be successful if any softness is shown towards Muslim, Sikh or Christian communalisms. People are always carefully watching the actions of the different ideological and political actors. When they find secular persons or parties showing softness towards minority communalisms, they tend not to believe their critique of Hindu communalism either. The notion that the secularists object only to Hindus acting communally and turn a blind eye towards Muslim, Sikh or Christian communalists is beginning to make an impact on many secular-minded Hindus. Today it is a major element in Hindu communal ideological thrust. Hindu communalists tend to succeed in branding secularism as 'minorityism', 'minority-appeasement', or pseudo-secularism'. It appeals to the strong sentiments of the Indian people for national unity and puts forth the claim that Hindu domination or rule alone can keep the country united and, simultaneously, protect Hindu interests. The answer has to be to reiterate secular opposition to all communalisms.

4

THEMES IN COMMUNAL IDEOLOGICAL OFFENSIVE

There are four common themes in the continuous Hindu communal ideological offensive and propaganda by the RSS and its front organizations during the last two decades. First is its effort to link communalism to religious appeal, primarily through the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation since 1984 (having failed to do so in 1980 through the *Ekatamata Yatra*-carrying Ganga water to different parts of the country by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad). Second, the effort to appropriate Indian culture. Third, the portrayal of communalism as nationalism. And the fourth, the attack on secularism as 'minorityism' and 'pseudo-secularism'.

In all the four cases a certain falsity and distortion of history, concepts/and reality is involved.

(A) COMMUNALISM AND RELIGION

Religion or religious differences do not lie at the roots of communalism. They are not responsible for communalism. Communalism, or making religious difference the basis of political organization, mobilization and action is not inherent or inevitable in a religiously plural society, marked by the existence of many religions and therefore religious differences. Nor are the communalists guided by the motive of protecting or promoting or reforming or developing their religion. They are not inspired by religion nor is religion the end or object of communal politics. In other words religion is not the underlying cause of communalism. It is only communalism's vehicle. We may explain this by recourse to a close historical analogy. The religious distinction between the Christian Germans and the Jewish Germans was real, but it was not responsible for the rise of—was not the cause of—Nazism or anti-Jewish politics or racialist anti-Semitic theories and politics. That is, Nazism as an ideology did not originate in these differences. Similarly, the colour distinction between blacks and whites is real but it is not the cause of racism, that is racism does not originate in the differences in colour. The same was the case with religious distinction and the rise of communalism. As Nehru put it in the *Discovery of India*, communal conflict has 'nothing to do with religion, though religion often masked the issue.'

Redressal of a religious grievance or conflict on a religious issue is not basic to tackling or solving the communal problem. Religious issues, differences or even conflicts, may and sometimes do take place, but they can be settled through a give and take approach. They can be, and should be, prevented from encroaching on politics. And, of course, every guarantee should be given in practice, as is provided in our Constitution, for the protection of religious freedom.

It is necessary in this respect to distinguish between religion as a belief system and the ideology of religious identity for economic and political purposes which is

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However, while religion does not lead to communalism, religious narrow-mindedness, bigotry and obscurantism (in the name of going back to the so-called earlier purer form of a religion) do create a certain receptivity to communal ideology and politics. Such elements prevail in a different manner and to a different extent indifferent religions and localities and in different religious practices. These elements should be brought out, analyzed, criticized and eliminated. The process has to be different for different religions and different regions, localities, and social groups.

In practice, however, the opposite is happening in recent years; and efforts are being made to strengthen precisely such elements in different religions. For example, such universally respected religious-cultural figures as Ram and Krishna, respected equally by Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, are being communalized. Such is also the case with such religious-cultural-social functions as Dussehra, Diwali, Holi, various Pujas of local gods, goddesses and faqirs, Muharram, Id, Shab-e-Barat, Christmas and birthdays of Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus, etc. The pre-communal social situation in this regard has been depicted by many authors. Till recently, and even now in many areas, as atmosphere of social harmony prevailed in Indian towns and villages, with people of different religions participating in one another's festivals, marriages and other domestic events and sharing their joys and sorrows. In his Autobiography, the famous nationalist leader, Bipin Chandra Pal, after discussing the wide participation of Hindus in Muharram in a Sylhet village, pointed out that ritualistic consideration in no way affected social life in the village among Hindus and Muslims.

> The community in our village was… a very mixed one. We had not only almost every important Hindu caste but a fairly large Mahomedan population also. And the intercourse between the Hindus and the Mahomedans was almost as free and friendly as that among the different Hindu castes themselves. In my father's house we used to invite our Mahomedan neighbour, the zemindar, to all our domestic functions, except the Pujas, which they could not attend, though there was regular exchange of presents between us during the Mahomedan festival of Id as well as on occasions of marriage or death.

Pal continues:

> This Mahomedan neighbour, I still remember, used to send a piece of cloth and a couple of rupees whenever there was any *shradh* or after-death ceremony in our house; and we used to return these to them on similar occasions. We were permitted to catch fish from their tanks on every festive occasion in our house as they were permitted to freely use our fish preserve for their own use on festive occasions in their own house. In these matters no manner of distinction was made between our Hindu and our Mahomedan neighbours. And the general Moslem population of the village were (sic) treated similarly and practically on the same footing of social equality, within the limitations that caste and religion imposed, as the Hindu peasantry used to be treated. Our differences in religious faiths and practices made not the slightest difference in these social amenities and relations. There was perfect toleration of one another among members of both the communities.

A survey of a Punjab village carried out by the Punjab Board of Economic Inquiry in the early 1930s noted:

> There are two mosques built of burnt bricks and in very

> good condition. Separate rooms in the compound are provided for travelers and marriages parties of all faiths and creeds. The investigator saw a Hindu marriage party staying in these rooms and singing songs, but, of course, stopping at the times of Muslim prayers. The inhabitants of the village have been accustomed to these conditions from time immemorial.

Regarding life in his twin-villages, Zeradei and Jamapur, Rajendra Prasad, our first President, noted in his *Autobiography*:

> As one could see, religion permeated the village life, and there was perfect harmony between Hindus and Muslims. Muslims would join Hindus in the boisterous festival of Holi. On the occasion of Dasahra, Diwali and Holi, the Maulavi would compose special verses… Hindus participated in Mohurrum by taking out Tazias. The Tazias of the well-to-do Hindus in Zeradei and Jamapur were bigger and brighter than those of the poor Muslims… (In the Tazia procession) the atmosphere would be surcharged with enthusiasm and all distinctions between Hindus and Muslims would disappear.

While religion is not the cause of communalism and the communalists have little to do with religion or interest, in it, what is true is that the communalists use religious differences as the basis of their politics: they exploit religion for political ends. They have no other reference to religion or religious issues.

In this era of mass politics, they try to attract the masses by exciting their deep religious feelings, by arousing the fear that their religion is in danger. To raise communalism from mere middle-class phenomenon to a popular movement, religion is used as an emotionalizing and inflammable factor.

Hindu communalism remained weak before 1947, and, in fact till 1984, possessing no real mass support because it was not able to harness religious fervour. It did talk of protecting the interests of the Hindus and their culture or *Sanskrit*. But this was not an emotive enough slogan. Hindu communalism did get aroused on the issue of the cutting of a *peepal* tree or the killing of a cow, or the selling of beef, or a Hindu girl marrying a Muslim boy, or a quarrel between a Muslim and a Hindu shopkeeper, or some other local issue. The streets would then turn red with blood during a communal riot. But these would remain local issues and would not sustain a prolonged communal divide or sense of Hindus or Hindu religion being in danger. Nor could they provide large-scale or long-lasting electoral benefits. One also did not hear much of *Hindutva* in those years.

Same was the case with Muslim communalism before 1938 when it had no mass base and was mainly confined, except in periods of communal tension, to Muslim landlords and sections of the middle classes. It was from 1938 onwards that M.A. Jinnah and the Muslim League leadership began to place increasing emphasis on religion and religious zeal and use religious symbols. Above all, Muslim communalism acquired massive support during the 1940s by arguing that Islam would be in danger in a united and secular India, and Pakistan would embody 'the renaissance of Islam'.

In a desperate situation, with the communalists having been routed in the elections of 1979, the Hindu communalists decided to borrow from the pre-1947 Muslim League's book and to copy the League's reliance on the emotionalizing appeal of religion and to join communalism with religious appeal. The *Ekatmata Yatra* initiated in 1980 having failed, finally, in 1984 the Hindu communalists picked up the inflammable Ram Janmabhoomi issue. In fact, some such emotional issue was needed to raise communal politics to the level of a popular movement. Ram occupies a unique place not only in northern India, but also in the rest of the country. He is the incarnation of all the values that Hindu (or even a non-Hindu) cherishes. His name touches the hearts and minds of tens of millions. Once the belief was spread that an actual Ram Janmabhoomi existed and that it was not in the hands of Hindus, many Hindus were aroused and were willing to support the communalists who had raised the cry of Ram and Sita in prison. The Hindu communalists also increasingly relied on the openly sectarian body like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and religious priests, *sants* and *sadhus*. In this, they once again aped the pre-1947 Muslim League which had used mosques and *mullas* and *moulavis* to propagate communalism among the masses. The Muslim communalists also reciprocated in the same spirit. Instead of seeing the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and the demotion of the Babri Mosque in 1992 as an attack on secularism, making the Mosque as a scapegoat, they portrayed these as the beginning of an attack upon Islam which, if not halted, would lead to its gradual extinction in India.

Relying more and more on irrational appeals, the communalists, also, now, became less open to argument and rational thought and incapable of learning from Indian and world history.

It is important to note that the purely religious or the logical content of Hindu communalism has been meagre. Apart from anti-Muslim rhetoric or construction of temples on the grounds where mosques exist today, the communalists seldom discuss or bring out any religious issue. That the role of religion in the politics of the communalists is entirely extraneous and instrumental—the role of a mask—is clearly brought out if we take a look at the religious side of the communal leaders, many of whom are not orthodox or even practicing Hindus or Muslims. This was very true of M.A. Jinnah and most of the Muslim communal leaders before 1947. This was also true of Hindu communal leaders before and after 1947. V.D. Savarkar, the founder of Hindu communal ideology, was, for example, a rationalist and an atheist. Similarly, many of the Hindu communal leaders are Arya Samajists. It is a basic tenet of Arya Samaj that there is only one God and that neither Ram and Krishna nor the popular gods and goddesses are divine. Swami Dayanand, the founder of Arya Samaj, was also highly critical and dismissive of so-called holy men and *sants* and *sadhus*. Yet many communalists, who are Arya Samajists, have been in the forefront of the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation and active members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in the company of the *sadhus* and *sants*. M.S. Golwalkar, the real founder and the first Sar Sangh Chalak (supreme leader) of the RSS, included religion as a basic determinantof nationality, but equated Hinduism with 'following *Varnas* and *Ashramas*.' Yet, how many communalists follow Ashramas and retire accordingly, or would defend the *varnas* or the caste system? To get the dalit votes, they publicly oppose the caste system and swear by Dr. Ambedkar. In fact, many of the top communal leaders among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs seldom follow the basic values and tenets of their religion.

On the other hand, many religious persons are firmly opposed to communalism and committed to secularism. For example, Gandhiji, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, C. Rajagopalachari and Rajendra Prasad were deeply religious and yet fully secular. They, as many other religious persons, did not let their commitment to their religion come in the way of their commitment to secularism. Similarly, the early 20th century revolutionaries took to religion and mysticism for inspiration, but they were not communalists.

To them, religion was a source of inner strength, which enabled them to withstand colonial repression and to risk, and often lose, their lives. It inspired them to become fighters for the national liberation of all Indian people and not organizers of communal politics, spouting hate against other section of the Indian people. While the religious beliefs of the revolutionaries led them to fight against imperialism, the communalists were, as we shall see later in Appendix II, often pro-imperialism and, in any case, served imperialism objectively by dividing the Indian people and turning the edge of their politics against other Indians and not against the colonial rulers.

Thus communalism was, in terms of religion, a sleight of hand. Though relying on religion for communal demarcation, it had hardly any religion in it.

It is, therefore, necessary that every effort should be made to separate religion from communalism. Communal parties must not be allowed to usurp religious sentiments or the cultural heritage of India. It should be made clear to the people that communalism is not in keeping with the tenets of Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism or Christianity. Their practice of violence and preaching of hatred against the followers of other religions have no sanction in their own religion. In fact, the communalists are enemies of their own religion; they do grave injustice to it. This point should be publicly and repeatedly brought home to the people by persons of genuine religious belief. There is also a danger in giving leadership in the religion sphere to the communalists. Secular persons, who are themselves deeply religious, have also to be active in the religious arena. At the same time hey have to learn not to collapse the religious and the secular. They should follow the example of Gandhiji who was deeply religious but kept the two spheres—the religious and the secular—apart.

It may also be pointed out that any effort to build a state on Hindu communal basis would also be a menace to Hinduism as such. The greatness of Hinduism lies precisely in its catholicity, broad-mindedness and philosophical diversity which embraces even atheism.

In general, the heart of any ideological campaign against communalism has to be, above all, separation of religion from politics and opposition to the intrusion of religion into secular fields.

One concrete step in this direction should be the imposition of a complete ban on the use of religious places, such as temples, *sadhu’s akharas*, mosques, gurdwaras, churches and religious processions, for political purposes and political propaganda. Any political discussion or speech within the precincts of a religious place should be made a cognizable offence. The legal ban on use of religion in electioneering should be rigidly enforced. And secular parties and groups should no longer associate with religious persons such as Shankaracharyas, Imams, Maulavis, priests and granthis.

(B) COMMUNALISM AND INDIAN CULTURE

Though communalists appeal to and claim to be champions of our (Indian) culture, in fact they are hostile to its basic content and character. They deny its basic composite character in the name of the Hindu culture. They adopt a purely religion-based definition of culture, and that too based on the religion of the upper classes and upper castes. They assert that there can be no common cultural ground or even mutual cultural interaction between the Hindus, Muslims, and Christians, since, by definition, their religions were different.

Any effort to impose a single pattern of life and culture on the Indian people is bound to prove to be disastrous. In fact, communalism and the communalists are alien to our culture and civilization.

Secularism, on the other hand, has a strong basis in the best of Indian traditions and civilizational values and the underlying spirit of Indian culture and the all-pervading and deep-seated humanism of our people as reflected in Ashokan inscriptions, Ramayan, Sufi, Bhakti and other folk traditions. Moreover, the religious element was strongly presenting our civilization, but it did not dominate it. Our Constitution too derived its authority from the people and not from any religious authority or texts.

Indian society had mostly been religiously and culturally tolerant, universalist rather than narrow, open to the influences of others, and willing to adapt to and absorb the best of them. It has been opposed to cultural separatism and has favoured and practiced 'dynamic civilisational interaction'. This has been the source of its great strength through the ages. As Jawaharlal Nehru put it: 'The whole history of India was witness of the toleration and even encouragement of minorities and of different racial groups. There is nothing in Indian history to compare with the bitter religious feuds and persecutions that prevailed in Europe. So we did not have to go abroad for ideas of religious and cultural toleration; these were inherent in Indian life.'

India had always been a country of many religions. Apart from the dominant Hindu faith, itself containing diverse trends, there were Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity and Hebrew (Jewish) religions in the ancient period. And then there were Zoroastianism and Islam during the medieval period. However, from the beginning, and with rare exceptions both in the ancient and medieval periods, there existed, to quote Nehru again, 'that atmosphere of tolerance and reasonableness, that acceptance of free-thought in matters of faith, that desire and capacity to live and let live, which are dominant features of Indian culture'. In fact, this tolerance and broad-mindedness, 'this freedom to people to live the life of their choice,' was one of the most remarkable achievements of the Indian people. This spirit of the Indian people was embodied in Ashoka's famous edicts: 'All sects deserve reverence for one reason nor another. By thus acting a man exalts his own sect and at the same time does service to the sects of other people.' Communalism, on the other hand, represents fear, hate, irrationality and violence.

Our composite culture, based on its strong tendency towards social and cultural synthesis and continuity of tradition, is an important and basic feature of Indian civilizational development. As Nehru has put it, one of the great achievements of the ancestors of the Indians was 'their capacity to absorb other peoples and their cultural accomplishments, synthesize them and develop a varied and mixed culture'. The medieval religious and social reformers, such as Guru Nanak, Kabir, Baba Farid, Narsi Mehta and Tulsi Das, were great advocates and preachers of this cultural synthesis. Nor was the social and cultural synthesis, the development of the composite and plural culture, confined

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to the upper classes, who developed a highly intricate and sophisticated culture. Currents of synthesis of thought and way of living were even more powerful among the common people and were reflected in their daily life.

In the villages there prevailed, as they still do, intimate social and cultural relations between Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians. Caste or religion did not come in the way. Muslims were familiar with Hindu mythology and popular stories, as were Hindus with Muslim beliefs. Common popular culture and ways of life tended to prevail. Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs lived within a common socio-economic framework, based on a network of common ties and a large number of common social customs, conventions and cultural forms. They led similar lives, did the same kind of work as peasants and artisans, spoke the same language, wore the same kind of clothes, had the same or similar social and cultural practices, joined each others festivals, or helped each other celebrate them, and often prayed at the same local shrines of holy men and women. Painting, folk tales, songs and dances, through which a people's soul and creativity and a sense of living are expressed, developed in common. Different social practices, taboos and religious beliefs did not affect social life.

India is a unique nation-state as also civilization. This uniqueness lies precisely in its cultural diversity and plurality and the co-existence and integration of different religious, linguistic, regional and cultural strands.

We, Indians, are a diverse people in terms of religions, languages, regions, castes and cultures. Yet a common cultural thread runs through our lives. This underlying unity in diversity, this effort to develop a common outlook even while respecting India's rich diversity is one of the hall marks of our civilization. This is why the twin concepts of composite culture as also the diversity of cultures, devised and discerned by the finest of modern Indian intellectuals, are basic to the integrity of the Indian people and the nation-state. Indian people can exist as a unified people only if this rich diversity is fully respected and recognized. This diversity is a source of strength to the Indian people and their nationhood and is not to be decried or denied but is to be celebrated. Secularism does not mean giving up our historically evolved, broad based rich cultural heritage. But it does mean preserving its composite, multi-cultural character. Communalism goes against this concept of unity in diversity on which Indian national Movement was based. Uniformity is not unity. Any effort to homogenize the Indian people's culture, to deny the twin concepts of a composite culture and diversity of culture, is to weaken our social fabric and is bound to undermine India's unity and sow seeds of division and disintegration in the country.

India has much to teach the world, especially as a larger and larger part of the world is turning multi-religious and multi-cultural. India can also not progress without the integration of our centuries-old culture with modern science and scientific outlook and the best of modern democratic thought and culture and values. Much that was negative in the past has also to be discarded as all the great religious and social reformers in India's long history have advocated and worked for. Unfortunately, the communalists tend to discard most of what is rich and great in our cultural heritage and to hug most of what has been negative.

(C) COMMUNALISTS AND 'PSEUDO-SECULARISM' AND 'MINORITYISM'

A major attack on secularism by the RSS-BJP takes the form of describing secularism as pseudo-secularism and minorityism. An important component of communal propaganda, usually carried on in a subterranean manner through word of mouth, is that the secular parties and individuals have been favouring the minorities and reducing the Hindus to the level of second class citizens. The purpose is to create a feeling of fear—the fear of being over-powered by the minorities—in the minds of the Hindus, who otherwise constitute more than 80 per cent of the population.

The term pseudo-secularism implies that those who profess to be secular are really not so but are really anti-Hindu or pro-Muslim. The charge of 'minorityism' implies that they really favour the minorities and cater to them while taking the Hindus for granted and trying to keep them down, that there was, during the Nehru era and after, 'discrimination against Hindus' and 'favouritism to minorities'. The secular forces are regularly accused of 'Muslim appeasement'.

There is, in fact, nothing new in the charge. It was a stock-in-trade of the communal propaganda against the nationalist leadership; in general and Gandhiji in particular for their secularism before 1948. While the Muslim communalists accused Gandhiji and other leaders of the national movement of being anti-Muslim, the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS accused them, sometimes in vicious language, of appeasement of the Muslims and of being anti-Hindu. (Now it is the Human Rights Commission and the Election Commission which are so accused!) The Muslim communalists denounced Gandhiji as the enemy of Islam who was out to subjugate Muslims and suppress their culture and to establish Hindu Raj. For example, in his presidential address to the Muslim League in 1940, M.A. Jinnah described Gandhiji as 'the one man responsible for turning the Congress into an instrument for the revival of Hinduism. His ideal is to revive Hinduism and establish Hindu raj in this country.' In March 1940, he told the Aligarh students: 'Mr. Gandhi's hope is to subjugate and vassalize the Muslims under a Hindu raj.'

Some Hindu communalists denounced Gandhiji for being a virtual traitor to what they called the 'Hindu nation'. Thus, referring to Gandhiji and other Congress leaders, M.S. Golwalkar, the then head of the RSS, in a vicious attack on them, declared in 1947: 'Those who declared "no Swaraj without Hindu-Muslim unity" have thus perpetrated the greatest treason on our society. They have committed the most heinous sin of killing the life-spirit of a great and ancient people." He also accused Gandhiji of declaring that "the simplest way in which this unity (i.e. Hindu-Muslim unity) can be achieved is for all Hindus to become Muslims.' Similarly, he accused Gandhiji and other Congress leaders of asking the 'Hindu' 'to ignore, even submit meekly to the vandalism and atrocities of the Muslims.' In effect, he (the Hindu) was told: 'Forget all that the Muslims have done in the past and all they are now doing to you. If your worshipping in the temple or your taking out Gods in procession in the streets irritates the Muslims, then don't do it. If they carry away your wives and daughters, let them. Do not obstruct them. That would be violence.'

Earlier, in 1939, referring to Congress leaders, M.S. Golwalkar had written: 'Strange, very strange that traitors should be enthroned as national heroes and patriots heaped with ignominy.' The Congress, he said, was created by Hume, Wedderburn, and Cotton as 'an instrument to destroy the national consciousness' and it 'has been, as far they are concerned, a success. Our own 'denationalization' under the name of Nationality is nearing its consummation.' Golwalkar repeatedly referred to the Congress leaders as 'these creatures (who) took upon themselves the burden of 'leading' the people' and as men of the stamp of the traitors Jaychand, Man Singh and Chandrarao Morey. He also wrote: 'Here we had leaders who were, as if, pledged to sap all manliness from their own people. However, this is not a mere accident of history. This leadership only came as a bitter climax of the despicable tribe of so many of our ancestors who during the past twelve hundred years sold their national honour and freedom to foreigners, and joined hands with the inveterate enemies of our country and our religion in cutting the throats of their own kith and kin to gratify their personal egoism.'

Nor did V.D. Savarkar lag behind. In June 1944, he accused Gandhiji of trying to establish Muslim rule in India, even if it meant foreign, Afghan rule. He said: 'Had not Gandhiji himself conspired with the Ali Brothers to invite an invasion by the Pathans and to enthrone the Amir of Afghanistan as the Emperor of India? Had he not declared again in the year 1940 in writing and repeated it now and then that if the Nizam subduing the Hindu princes and with the support of Frontier tribes took Delhi and became the ruler of India that would be a perfect home rule, a cent per cent Swaraj? Thus a Pathani or a Nizami Muslim Raj is to Gandhiji a cent per cent Swaraj.'

Similarly Dr. Moonje, Hindu Mahasabha leader, wrote in 1938: 'Since the rise of Mahatma to dictatorship in the Congress, the Congress has developed a tendency which may aptly he called a pro-Muslim mentality at the cost of Hindu interests.'

It was this incendiary, communal propaganda of hate and lies and the provocative propaganda that Gandhiji was pro-Muslim and betrayer of 'Hindu interests' that created the atmosphere for the assassination of Gandhi. Who pulled the trigger and to which party or group the assassin belonged is of little importance. This was put quite aptly in a letter by Sardar Patel at the time: 'All their (RSS) leaders' speeches were full of communal poison. As a final result of this poisonous atmosphere (a situation) was created in which such a ghastly tragedy (Gandhiji's murder) became possible.'

There was, of course, no truth in the charge of 'pseudo-secularism' or 'minority-appeasement' against Gandhiji and other nationalist leaders. Nor is there any truth in this charge today against the secular forces. It is primarily an effort to undermine sturdy secularism which alone can be the basis of a strong, united and democratic India.

Despite the so-called 'minority appeasement', there is not a single area of life where Muslims are favoured; not in government services, educational institutions, armed forces, the media, private business or public sector. In fact, Muslims have not made any gains as Muslims. Their educational, economic and social backwardness has continued as before. Their share in jobs in the bureaucracy, educational institutions, the police and the armed forces, in trade or industry, or in employment in the corporate sector, continues to be very low. For example, the representation of Muslims in the government services is 4.5 per cent in Class, I, II and 6 per cent in Class III and IV. Their share of employment

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in the corporate sector is even less. In the High Courts, out of 310 judges in April 1980, only 14 were Muslims. In the Central Secretariat Service only 1.43 per cent were Muslims; and only 0.72 per cent of the Section Officers were Muslims. Similarly, their enrolment in schools, colleges and universities continues to be very low. According to the Gopal Singh Commission Report, only 3.41 per cent of engineering students and 3.44 per cent of medical students were Muslims 9.41 per cent of the borrowers under bank loan schemes were Muslims, but they accounted for only 3.37 per cent of the loan amount. In fact, in no walk of life do Muslims have a share even equal to their proportion in population.

And, of course, the claim that the Hindus are discriminated against in secular India or that they have become second class citizens in India (Muslims and Christians being first class citizens) is laughable and a typical example of Goeblesian belief that the bigger the lie the more effective it is. Only four examples are given:

1. While Hindu personal law has been reformed, Muslim personal law has not been. But this should be seen as an act of discrimination against and harmful to the 50 per cent of Muslims who are women rather than as an act of discrimination against Hindus, unless the argument is that reform of Hindu civil law has been harmful to Hindus and therefore not extending it to Muslims is helping the latter. Tied to this assertion is the view that keeping the Muslim personal law as it enables Muslims to have four wives and leads to increase in their population. But population is tied not to the number of wives a man has but to the number of women of reproductive age. If a Muslim man has four wives, three Muslim men have to go without wives. Four couples are likely to have more children than one man with four wives. Consequently, the custom of having more than

one wife reduces the rate of population growth! The fact is that the number of Muslims who have more than one wife is very small and not larger than the number of Hindus having more than one wife. In fact, the communal argument for a uniform civil code is totally false. But the positive argument for it from the point of view of women's interest is very sound.

2. The Haj pilgrimage of Muslims is subsidized. Firstly, the percentage of Hajis that is subsidized is small. Secondly, the state also subsidizes yatras to Vaishnodevi, etc., and the organization of Kumbh melas and other religious celebrations, etc. Would it be a good idea for the state to withdraw from all these activities? The entire objection is based on the hidden, communal argument that Hindus have rights that Muslims, etc. should not have because the former are the real citizens of India and Muslims, etc., are really foreigners whose holy places are outside India (Savarkar's and Golwalkar's view).
3. There is a minority commission for Muslims, Christians and Sikhs. But a minority commission exists to protect the minorities against discrimination. The day communalism in all its form disappears, so will the minority commission. In any case religious, cultural and linguistic minorities or groups are given protection against discrimination the world over. One has not heard of a majority commission anywhere. However, our Constitution guarantees all, including all types of minorities, against discrimination on grounds of religion, language or sex.
4. The Hindus cannot rebuild their temples after destroying mosques which were allegedly built on their sites after destroying them. The fact is that Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians can freely build temples, mosques, gurudwaras and churches wherever land is acquired for them. No religion is favoured over others. But destroying existing religious structures is against all Indiana traditions or humanity

anywhere in the world. The argument of the communalists is really a window into their bigoted minds.

Though there is no truth in the charge of 'pseudo-secularism' or 'minorityism' against secular forces, it is still necessary to examine why so many basically secular persons have been disoriented and have tended to believe in this particular critique of secular persons and parties.

The reason lies primarily in the post-Nehru tendency to ignore the growth of minority communalism and to treat it with kid gloves or refusal to attack it as vigorously as Hindu communalism is attacked. There is no doubt that in the last three decades or so secular parties and individuals have developed a tendency to associate with and even enter into compromises with different communal parties and groups. When this opportunism occurs *vis-à-vis* Hindu communalists, secular individuals and parties rightly criticize it as a sacrifice of secularism, but when this opportunism occurs *vis-à-vis* Muslim or Sikh communalism, they (the secularists) tend to ignore it or even justify it.

But this is a concession to or appeasement of minority communalism; it does not benefit minorities at all—rather it harms them. They have made no gains as its result. As pointed out earlier, for example, the educational, economic and social backwardness of Muslims has persisted. The Muslim Women (Protection on Right of Divorce) Act of 1986, popularly known as Shah Bano Act, catered to Muslim communalists and obscurantists; it harmed 50 per cent of Muslims who are women. Donating Rs. 50 lakhs to Shahi Imam or catering to him in other ways has in no way 'favoured' Muslims. Declaring a government holiday on the Prophet's birthday might appease religious fundamentalists, it 'benefits' few Muslims or rather it is nearly 95 per cent non-Muslim government employees, along with nearly 5 per cent or so Muslim employees who get a holiday. Nor did the handing over of the Aligarh Muslim University, through the Aligarh Muslim University Amendment Act, to communal and obscurantist elements in anyway help the spread of education and democratic and secular ideas among the Muslims. On the other hand, tolerance of Muslim communalism has increased the weight of obscurantist and backward-looking social, cultural and political forces among the Muslims. Similarly in the last two decades, Sikh communalism has imposed damage, above all, on the Sikhs.

The failure to vigorously and consistently critique and oppose minority communalism is in part the result of the widespread notion among secular persons that minority communalism is not such a negative and dangerous phenomenon.

Politically, electoral considerations have led secular parties to treat the minorities as vote-banks and, therefore, to encourage, or at least not oppose, the political consolidation of minorities on non-programmatic, non-ideological or even plainly communal grounds. Only a few years ago a leading secular political scientist was urging the formation of a Muslim, Sikh, dalit and backward classes alliance.

Minority communalism, even when it is critically assessed, is given a 'soft' treatment and often tolerated and even catered to out of pure opportunism or misplaced concern for the minorities.

Political opportunism is often accompanied by ideological opportunism. Many secular intellectuals glibly talk uncritically and even appreciatively of Muslim or Sikh identity, balking only at the notion of Hindu identity. Similarly, they describe Muslim or Sikh communal leaders as Muslims or Sikh leaders, though luckily, as yet, not describing Hindu communal leaders as Hindu leaders.

As we have repeatedly pointed out, it is true that the main threat to the country comes from Hindu communalism, which alone can take a fascist form in India. But that does not mean that minority communalism is not highly injurious both to the minorities concerned and the Indian society as a whole. Moreover, far from successfully defending minority interests, minority communalism tends to feed and promote Hindu communalism. And, of course, as brought out in Section III above, the genuine grievances of the minorities should be redressed and the discrimination to which minorities are sometimes and in some areas subjected should be removed.

At the same time, the critique of opportunist or soft and tolerant approach towards minority communalism should not be used as a garb or an alibi for majority communalism. This is what Hindu communalists do. Only those have the credentials to make such critique who are fully secular and are open critics of majority communalism and who recognize and accept that Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian communalisms are variants of a single ideology and are to be opposed simultaneously.

(D) COMMUNALISM AND NATIONALISM

The real struggle against communalism will take place on the terrain of nationalism, for the communalists claim to be nationalists and communalism masquerades as nationalism.

However powerful the appeal of the Ram Janmabhoomi issue and however great the confusion caused by the communal branding of secularism as 'minorityism' and 'pseudo-secularism', the roots of secularism are deep enough in the Indian people, Indian civilization and the national movement, and the secular political forces are still strong enough to deny Hindu communalism and its political party, the BJP, full control over the Indian state.

The BJP and its parent body, the RSS, recruit their cadres through strong and naked communal ideology. The BJP and its sister-organizations, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal—all carefully controlled by the RSS—have succeeded in harnessing the Ram Janmabhoomi issue and its religious appeal to gain entry into the minds of a large number of Hindus and to weaken their resistance to communalism.

The attack on secularism and secular parties and groups as pseudo-secular and the charge of minorityism against them has also disoriented many middle-class persons.

But the leadership of the RSS and BJP knows that religious and communal appeals cannot bring them into full political power in a vast and diverse India. To acquire the necessary political legitimacy and to grow nation-wide on a scale large enough to acquire a hegemonic (dominant) position in Indian politics, the BJP must take recourse to a more universal doctrine and, therefore, appeal to nationalism. It must give communalism a nationalist garb. This is especially so because the national movement made communalism a dirty word and nationalism an inspiring doctrine. The Hindu communalists, therefore, argue that they are working not only in the interests of the Hindus but much more for the interests of the Indian nation. This is also because they portray the Hindus as the only guardians of Indian

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nationalism and national interests. Hindu communalism is thus portrayed as nationalism while Muslim, Sikh and Christian communalisms are portrayed as anti-national.

Consequently, the RSS and BJP have been trying hard to occupy the nationalist ground and present their communalism as nationalism. Almost every issue of the *Organizer* and the *Panchajanya* carries an article or write-up linking Hindu communalism with, or portraying it as, nationalism. More recently, the RSS and its front organizations portray *Hindutva* as the only means of building up and 'saving' the nation and argue that *Hindutva* and nationalism are synonymous.

Events in Assam, Punjab, North-East and Kashmir and terrorism have aroused fear and insecurity regarding India's integrity in the minds of the people, and given the communalists an opening hitherto barred. While the earlier communal slogans of Hindus and Hinduism in danger had limited appeal among the people the notion of 'India in danger' arouses wide-spread anxiety. The RSS and BJP play upon this fear, insecurity and anxiety and put forward their communalism or *Hindutva* as the remedy.

They hold even recourse to religion as an aspect of the assertion of nationalism. Thus, even the Ram Janmabhoomi issue has sometimes been portrayed as really an aspect of nationalism rather than as being merely religious. Thus, at the height of the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation, K.S. Sudarshan, now head of the RSS, wrote: 'The laying of bricks for the *Shilanyas* of Ram Janmabhoomi temple was not merely a matter of a temple; it was symbolically, laying the foundation of this Rashtra (nation).' He compared the *Shilanyas* with the 'dismantling of the bricks of the Berlin Wall'. Similarly, according to Ram Swarup, a major RSS ideologue, the *Shilanyas* 'marks a second phase and perhaps a more important phase of India's recent struggle for independence.' Reporting on the Jaipur session of the BJP held in February 1991, the *Organizer* correspondent reported that it was decided to "widen the scope of the (Ayodhya) campaign by juxtaposing Ram with Rashtriyata (nationalism)'. Atal Behari Vajpayee told the VHP rally of the 4 April 1991 that the construction of the temple at Ram Janmabhoomi was necessary because national honour had to be restored.

It is to be noted that one reason why the BJP has been successful, to a certain extent, in winning over sections of the middle classes has been largely because of its appeal to nationalism. A major reason why many professionals, retired bureaucrats and army officers have made a bee-line for the BJP in recent years has been the perceived threats to India's unity, integrity and stability. Many have been impressed by the RSS's and BJP's illusory reputation for discipline.

The reality is—and it should be brought home to the people—that communalism and communal organizations pose a threat to the Indian nation and nationalism. Any long-term strategy of combating communalism has to be based on denying the RSS and BJP the nationalist space. The secular forces have not only to expose their communal and fascist character and their philosophy and outlook based on fear, hatred and irrationality, but also to expose their basically anti-national, disintegrative character. The secularists must counterpoise secular, democratic nationalism to the communalist's counterfeit and disruptive definition of nationalism. Communalism is not, as some believe, 'backward looking nationalism'; it is not nationalism at all. Moreover, it is basically anti-national or opposite of nationalism.

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nation-state and democracy not only in India and other diverse and multi-religious societies, but in all modern states. All the major European nations from France to Britain, Germany and Italy had to fight against religious domination of their societies and to secularise their politics before they could emerge as fully structured nation-states. Interestingly, most of the Hindu communal arguments at the popular plane refer to what is happening in Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Arab countries, as if India should become a clone of the most backward nations instead of emulating those who are ahead of us. Firm nationalism, the Hindu communalists also say, can be built on the basis of Hindu religion. They completely ignore that none of the modern nations have been so built. On the other hand, a major weakness of the Arab states and Pakistan is their failure to adopt and practice democracy and secularism. The attempt to create a religion-based state in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Iran have created irresolvable problems for the nation-state building. Today, nearly all the forward looking Arab states are being compelled to fight Muslim fundamentalism and its attempts to capture state power.

Communalism threatens the prolonged historical process of India becoming a strong, integrated nation. While before 1947, encouraged by the colonial authorities, communalism divided the Indian people, weakened the anti-imperialist struggle and led to the partition of the country, it is no less dangerous today. It would prove equally divisive. The important task in India still is the building up of a united and strong India, promoting the process of the psychological integration of the Indian people. But this process cannot be developed without recognizing the diversity of the Indian people and that India was a land of many languages, religions, regions and cultures. A diverse society like India's can only be held together by a democratic structure with full freedom to the diverse socio-economic, cultural, religious and political trends to fully express themselves in their respective fields.

One false step can lead to the reversal of the historical process and disintegration of the country, as happened in 1947. Communalism as also regionalism can lead to disaster. Nationalism requires us to squarely face the challenge of communalism. While all communalisms are harmful to the nation, the thrust against minorities, which is at the heart of communalism as represented by the RSS and its front organizations, is a sure recipe for national disaster. Can any nation be strong if its minorities are discontented and alienated? Can anyone seriously believe that crores of Muslim, Sikh and Christian minorities of India can be suppressed, eliminated or even compelled to accept the status of second class citizens? What degree of barbaric and fascist force would be needed even to attempt the task, even though it is doomed to failure? And what would such an attempt do to our culture, values and civilization? What did the effort to suppress a far smaller number of Jews by Hitler and the Nazis do to German culture and psyche?

On the other hand, it is secularism which develops and defends the nation, strengthens it and promotes nationalism. The secular forces must firmly occupy the nationalist ground, even while constantly redefining nationalism in the direction of the masses—the poor—and social justice and equity. The national movement succeeded in marginalizing Hindu communalism by making secular nationalism a militant ideology and movement against imperialism. The RSS-BJP can be successfully critiqued as a divisive and disintegrative force only if secular forces are seen by the people as strong and successful defenders of the nation and its unity.

The people of India will not readily yield before the forces of disintegration. If secular nationalism is seen by them as inadequate in meeting the challenge of these forces, they will tend to turn to communalism, masquerading as nationalism. The communalists will then appeal to the strong sentiment of the Indian people for national unity and put forth the claim that Hindu rule alone can keep the country together. Ideologies like fascism, Nazism, racism and communalism grow only when secular and democratic forces are unable to overcome the crises plaguing a society.

The main issue facing the Indian people is that of development, their real malady is economic backwardness. The petty and divisive issues such as that of Ram Janmabhoomi should be relegated to the background. We have remained poor and weak because we missed the two industrial revolutions of the 19th and 20th centuries. We must not miss the current, ongoing new industrial revolution. This should be our real national agenda. The world is changing before our eyes and we must change along with it. To avoid the fate of becoming a marginalized nation in the world economic and political system, it is necessary to mobilize and focus the energies of the entire nation. No other issue, religious or political, should derail us from this real societal agenda. All divisive issues must be relegated to the background, at least till the development challenge is met. This issue is the touchstone on which the degree of the national commitment—of nationalism and anti-nationalism—would be judged by history.

Communalists talk of national pride and national self respect being involved in the Ram Janmabhoomi and other communal issues they raise. All of us want—every single Indian wants—to be proud of our country. But wherein do national pride, national self-respect, national strength and nationalism itself lie today? Can a politically and economically marginalized nation have self-respect? Can a nation hold up its head with pride if 25 to 30 per cent of the population live below the poverty line, over 40 per cent cannot read or write, a large number are still subjected to discrimination on grounds of caste or sex, and thousands die of cold and heat and hundreds commit suicide because they cannot feed their families.

National greatness today does not lie in harking back to the past, though the past is important in giving people self-confidence. National greatness is based on self-respect and self-confidence of the people. In lies in removing poverty, it lies in being economically strong and politically united and stable and in having the capacity to resist economic and political domination and having full control over the nation's internal and foreign policy. Independence and political strength today depend on economic strength and prosperity, on ensuring self-sustaining and self-generating growth both in agriculture and industry even while interacting vigorously with the world and being economically and politically fully integrated members of the world community. On the other hand, anything which detracts people's attention from their march towards national consolidation, economic and social development, greater social and economic equality and social justice is, in effect, an anti-national act.

Communalism is no answer to the problems of economic development, political strength, national unity and social and economic equity and equality. Our society faces many social, economic and political problems, which generate and fuel communalism, but communalism does not provide a solution to these problems. Even if the solutions provided by the communalists were accepted, they would not solve any of the problems facing the Indian people.

As an aside, it may be pointed out that the use of the terms 'Hindu nationalists' or 'Muslim nationalists' or 'Sikh nationalists' or religious nationalists to describe the communalists is totally inappropriate, misleading and even dangerous. The proper terms to designate them are the ones used by nationalist leaders—Gandhiji, Nehru, Sardar Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose and others—before 1947 and by all secular parties and leaders after 1947, i.e., Hindu communalists, Muslim communalists and Sikh communalists or communalists misusing their religions. As a result of this nomenclature, communalism acquired a negative connotation in Indian consciousness. By referring to communalism as nationalism, we give it legitimacy and enable the communalists to feel good. That is the reason why before 1947 the communalists liked to describe themselves as nationalists and the real nationalists refused to do so.

As a footnote, we may add an explanation as to how the terms Hindu nationalism and Muslim nationalism came to be used in the 1950s and after by Western scholars and journalists. First, the word communalism in its Indian meaning makes little sense in Western countries—at the most, it is associated with group-living or mistaken for a misspelling of communism. Consequently, Western writers and journalists writing for Western readers could not use the term communalism and fell back on using the term nationalism for it.

Secondly, they could not afford to displease their readers in Pakistan of Pakistan officials, politicians and intellectuals.

They had to have acceptability from them as also legitimacy in both India and Pakistan. Muslim communalists used the term Muslim nationalists for themselves after 1940 when Pakistan was demanded on the basis of the two-nation theory, that is, there existed two nations in India—a Hindu nation and a Muslim nation. The Western scholars could not displease the Pakistan establishment by describing pre-1947 Muslim League leaders as Muslim communalists. Hence, they described them as Muslim nationalists. By extension, Hindu communalists came to be described as Hindu nationalists. Later when Sikh communalists took to separatism and terrorism in Punjab in the 1980s, these scholars and other writers, instead of describing them as such, started describing them as Sikh nationalists. The Hindu communalists had, in any case, been asserting that India was a Hindu nation and describing themselves as Hindu nationalists. As pointed out earlier, Gandhiji and other nationalist leaders had always described the communalists—both Hindu and Muslim—as communalists. They could not describe the communalists as nationalists because the communalists were opposing the actual, ongoing nationalist movement and often collaborating with India's colonial rulers. In India, communalism was not religion-based nationalism or anti-imperialism as it was in Indonesia or Iran or some Arab countries. In these countries, political struggle was defined in religious terms but was directed against colonialism. In India communalists too defined politics in religious terms but their politics were directed against fellow Indians and not against colonialism; their fight was against other religious communities and against the Indian National Congress, the leader of the anti-imperialist struggle. Unfortunately, because of the remnants of colonial mentality, many Indian intellectuals and media persons have been aping their Western counterparts. There is, however, no reason why secular and nationalist Indians should do so, especially as communalism is the very opposite of nationalism.

It is necessary not to fall prey to the verbal jugglery and manipulation by the communalists, as many in the media and among the intellectuals do. Many also in this respect become victims of glib media talk and give legitimacy to the communalists. We should learn to call a spade a spade and avoid using overt or covert communal categories even though it may mean making a hard effort. And once we do so on a significant scale in our daily discourse, speeches, writing, etc. it will strengthen our secular approach.

(A) LEADERS OF 'COMMUNITIES'

There is a very common, subliminal though often unintended manner in which communalism tends to be legitimized, especially in the media. The newspapers, radio and television often refer to communal leaders as leaders of their 'communities'. Thus very often Muslim communal leaders are referred to as 'Muslim leaders' and Sikh communal leaders as 'Sikh leaders'. This tends to authenticate communalism in the eyes of the followers of a religion while treating the secular leaders as 'outsiders' who may be representing the nation, or class or a party or a trade union but not the religious 'community'. By inference this affirms both communal notions—that communal interests exist in real life and that the communalists, whatever their other faults or negative features, do represent these communal interests and are thus legitimate spokesperson of their 'communities'.

In the pre-1947 period, this legitimization was a major factor in the growth of Muslim and Sikh communalism, and this has been so also after 1947.

(B) SAFFRONIZATION AND PARIVAR

The terms saffron, saffronization, Sangh *parivar*, etc., are also to be avoided. For example, saffron is a hallowed colour in Hindu mythology. It was also the colour of Shivaji's flag. National revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh hailed the saffron flag. Hindu holy men usually put on saffron-coloured clothes. The Hindu communalists would like to appropriate the saffron colour. Why should it be handed over to them?

Similarly, the word *parivar* (family) connotes something desirable, something all of us would like to be part of, something we love. The BJP, VHP, Bajrang Dal, HMS, etc. are not part of a *parivar* and should not be so described and thus given a pleasant nomenclature. They are the front organizations of the RSS, the public, political-ideological instruments of the RSS, and are best described as such.

(C) HINDUTVA

The term '*Hindutva*' to describe Hindu religion-based politics or Hindu communalism should also be avoided. The latter is the right term. The word '*Hindutva*' was never used by the nationalist leadership to describe Hindu communalism during the freedom struggle or by Indian scholars. If the word means Hinduism, then that is the right word to use, for all Hindus believe in and practice Hinduism. On the other hand, many use the term '*Hindutva*' in the political sense as a synonym for Hindu communalism or what they call 'cultural nationalism'. They do so because communalism is an undesirable word and phenomenon in Indian people's political consciousness. The communalists are always looking for pleasanter terms for the same political phenomenon. It was V.D. Savarkar who first used the term 'Hindutva' in 1923 in his booklet with the same title to define Hindu communalism in non-religious terms. He felt that he could not appeal to Hinduism, for Hinduism as practiced by millions of Hindus all over the country was too diverse in terms of religious beliefs, doctrines and rituals. Any appeal to Hinduism as such would divide the Hindus. Another reason why Savarkar used the term '*Hindutva*' was because he was an atheist. He also used the term in order to exclude Muslims, Christians and Parsis from Indian nationality as defined by '*Hindutva*.'

The term 'Hindutva' as used by the communalists to describe their politics has nothing to do with Hinduism and is, in fact, because of the fear and hatred for which it stands in practice, against the spirit of Hinduism. The practitioners of communalism, using '*Hindutva*' as a shield, know little about Hinduism and its abiding traditions developed over the centuries. The greatness of Hinduism lies precisely in its deep humanist and plural character. It sees entire humanity as its extended family with shared values and spirituality based on the unity of all religions and acceptance of diverse

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paths to god and salvation—it even embraced atheism. It is totally opposed to hatred and fanaticism. It is precisely because of Hinduism's diversity that the communalists refuse to define their conception of 'Hindutva', Hinduism and Hindu culture. Which Hinduism or strand of Hindu religious system and philosophy would 'Hindutva' represent? In no time would the Hindus themselves be torn apart by religious and cultural feuds. The fact is that the Hindu communalists or the votaries of *'Hindutva'* are trying to do to Hinduism what *Jehadis* are doing to Islam in Pakistan, Bangladesh and many of the Arab countries.

Appendix I: INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT, SECULARISM AND COMMUNALISM

I. India's movement for freedom was based on a common vision of nation-building and commitment to nationalism, national unity and national development and a strong and united Indian nation based on a democratic and civil libertarian order, with emphasis on freedom of thought and expression. The belief was that only democracy could unite and hold together a vast and diverse country like India. Translated in economic terms independence depended on economic and social strength. The national movement was committed to rapid economic development along modern lines, to the removal of poverty and inequality, and to social change and social justice.

The social vision of the national movement encompassed a secular state and a secular and plural society so far as culture, religion and language were concerned. The leaders of the movement fully understood and maintained that Indian nationalism had to be based on sturdy secularism. The founders of the Indian Republic fully realized that a modern, strong and united India could not be built except on secular foundations. Facing frontally the challenge of communalism to nation-making, secularism was one issue on which they would make no compromise.

The heritage of this secular vision is an important aspect of the struggle against communalism. This heritage was so strong that despite the communal killings of the partition riots, despite the coming of millions of refugees who had lost their all in Pakistan, despite the resurgence of communal feelings in large parts of the country during 1946-47, we were able to contain communalism. Though the country was partitioned because we could not rout communalism, which was successful in partitioning our country, still, we managed to create a secular state and society and give ourselves a secular Constitution.

It is very interesting that the Indian national movement, especially from the 1880s onwards when the Indian National Congress was founded, never took up a religious issue for agitation except for the Khilafat issue during 1920-1922, that too it did because it was at the time, an anti-imperialist issue and part of Gandhiji's efforts to unite Hindus and Muslims in the struggle for national liberation. It never repeated the experiment. It also did not, especially after 1918, use religion in the ideological definition of nationalism or of its programme. Nor did it ever criticize the British rule because the British were Christians or describe the British rule as Christian rule. Not once was it said that the British rule should go because it was Christian. It was opposed because of its economic, political, psychological and cultural domination of the Indian people.

As a broad, all encompassing movement, the national movement accommodated in it various ideological strands from the conservatives to the leftists. During the 1920s, it even admitted communalists into its ranks so long as they accepted the objectives of Hindu-Muslim unity, the reality of the composite Indian culture, did not preach communal hatred and participated in the united struggle against colonialism. But once the communalists, Hindu or Muslim, talked of communal separatism, of Hindu nation and Muslim nation, preached hatred against the followers of other religions, refused to cooperate in the struggle against colonialism and even tried to disrupt it and, in practice, cooperated with colonial authorities, the movement turned against the communalists, to whichever religion they might belong. In 1938 the Indian National Congress, under the presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose, debarred members of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League from holding any office in the Congress from the lowest village branch upwards.

The Indian national movement defined secularism in the same comprehensive manner as discussed in Section I above: The state must be neutral towards all religious faiths or, as religious persons put it, the state must show equal regard for all faiths including atheism; the state must not discriminate in favour of or against any citizen on grounds of his or her religion; and communalism of every variety must be clearly and firmly opposed. Above all, religion must be separated from politics, economy and education and treated as a private or personal affair.

In this respect, some people mistakenly hold that Gandhiji's understanding of secularism was very different. This is not true. Gandhiji too defined, and 'lived' secularism in the same manner as the national movement as a whole. That Gandhiji was totally opposed to communalism and that was why Nathuram Godse killed him is well-known. Also well-known is his belief that a person should have the right to pursue his or her religion and not face any discrimination on the grounds of religion and that all persons should show equal regard for all religions including atheism.

It is, however, because of Gandhiji's oft-repeated formulation that politics cold not be divorced fro religion—from example, his statement in his *Autobiography* or *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, in 1925—that many assert that the definition of secularism as separation of religion from politics was not acceptable to Gandhiji. But a gross misunderstanding as well as ignorance of Gandhiji's views is involved here. Gandhiji was a deeply religious person and a very moral being. He used the word 'religion' in two different senses: one in its denominational sense, that is in terms of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc., and the other in the sense of belief in God and Truth and the traditional concept of Dharma—the moral code which guided a person's life. In asserting that politics should be based on religion, he did not mean it should be based on Hinduism, Islam, etc., but that it should be based on morality and ethics, that is *Dharma*—and religion was to him the fountainhead of morality. But he also repeatedly asserted that 'the fundamental ethics is common to all religions' and urged: 'Do not mix up religion and ethics'. It was in part to emphasize this commonness that he changed his earlier formulation 'God is Truth' to 'Truth is God'. But later, in the late 1930s and 1940s, when he saw that the communalists, both Hindu and Muslim communalists, were using religion in the organized, denominational and doctrinal form to divide the Indian people politically, to promote communal strife and hatred against followers of other religions, to propagate theories of 'Hindu Nation' and 'Muslim Nation', and to demand religion-based states, he completely changed his formulation regarding the relationship between religion and politics. He now asserted that religion, in the sense of Hinduism, Islam, etc., and politics should be kept separate, that religion must not be brought into politics and public sphere, and that it must be treated as a private affair of the individual. He said this not once, but tens of times, day after day, in his evening prayer meetings and in his weekly *Harijan* from 1940 till the day of his death. Some of his exhortations are recorded in his *Collected Works*.

Thus, he said in 1940: 'If religion is allowed to be as it is, a personal concern and a matter between God and Man.' In 1942: 'Religion is a personal matter which should have no place in politics.' In 1947: 'Religion is the personal affair of each individual, it must not be mixed up with politics or national affairs.' Also in 1947, he asserted: 'The state is bound to be wholly secular.' In 1946, he told a missionary: 'If I were a dictator, religion and state would be separate. I swear by my religion. I will die for it. It is my personal affair. The state has nothing to do with it.'

One weakness of the national movement in its struggle against communalism was the relative absence of a mass ideological campaign against it and for the spread of a secular outlook. The result was that the communal forces were not fully contained; they remained a running sore in the Indian polity, and even succeeded in partitioning the country. Even so, as pointed out earlier, it was one of the great triumphs of the Indian national movement that independent India succeeded in framing a secular Constitution and laying the foundations of a secular state and society despite the partition and the resurgence of communalism during 1946-47.

That major leaders of the national movement were fully committed to secularism, totally, opposed to communalism and would make no compromise on this question may be very briefly illustrated, though we could give many more examples—examples enough to fill a thick book.

II.A. We may take up Gandhiji first. It was because of his total opposition to communalism that Nathuram Godse, a communal fanatic, killed him. We have already quoted above Gandhiji's exhortations in the 1940s to keep religion out of politics. He was also opposed to communalism in all its variants—Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. As he put it in 1942: 'I hold it to be utterly wrong to divide men from men by reasons of religion.' He also refuted the basic communal assumption that the political and economic interests of Hindus and Muslims are different because of their following different religions. He wrote: 'What conflict of interest there can be between Hindus and Muslims in the matter of revenue, sanitation, police, justice or the use of public conveniences? The difference can only be in religious usage and observance with which a secular state has no concern.'

Gandhiji was totally committed to civil liberties. But he made one exception. He advocated taking away the freedom of speech and writing of those who spread communal hatred. He wrote in 1936: 'If I had the power, I shall taboo all literature calculated to promote communalism.' Communalism was, he regularly asserted, not only anti-national but also anti-Hinduism in the case of Hindu communalism and anti-Islam in the case of Muslim communalism.

B. Jawaharlal Nehru saw communalism of all hues—Hindu, Muslim or Sikh—as a divisive force that posed a great danger to the unity of independent India. 'We can only maintain our integrity on a secular basis,' he said. Communalism, on the other hand, 'would break up India'. On another occasion, he said, 'the activities of the communalists amounted to their thrusting a dagger in the body politic of India'. For this reason, he saw communalism as 'the major evil' and 'the most dangerous development' which had to be 'combated on all fronts' and completely rooted out from Indian life. Moreover, he wrote, 'we can meet and fight an external enemy. But what are we to do when the enemy is within ourselves and in our minds and hearts'.

He consistently argued that there could be no compromise on the communal issue: 'for any compromise on this issue can only mean a surrender of our principles and a betrayal of the cause of India's freedom.' The country, he said, should be willing to 'stand or fall' by secularism. 'Let us be clear about it without a shadow of doubt in any Congressman's mind', he told the AICC in July 1951, 'we stand till death for a secular state.' Earlier in December 1948, he had written to the Chief Ministers: 'It is always a dangerous thing to compromise with something that is definitely evil. The RSS movement is directly aimed at everything that nationalist India has stood for.' Consequently, he waged an incessant campaign against communalism and for a secular outlook.

Nehru also saw communalism as the Indian form of fascism and therefore secularism as an essential condition for democracy. During the late 1930sand 1940s, Nehru was able to discern the close resemblance of communalism to contemporary fascism. Communalists in India were taking recourse to the same methods and techniques of hatred and violence and the use of the big lie, same organizational structures and style of leadership. Thus, he said in 1939:

'Definitely fascist ideas are spreading not only in the Muslim League but also in the Hindu Mahasabha'. Referring to the Muslim League and Jinnah, he wrote in October 1940 that theirs was 'a negative programme of hatred and violence reminiscent of Nazi methods'. In 1945, he told Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, that the Muslim League had become 'Hitlerian in its leadership and policy.'

From 1947 on, Nehru began to describe the RSS as a fascist organization. For example, he wrote to the Chief Ministers in December 1947: 'We have a great deal of evidence to show that the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh is an organization which is in the nature of a private army and which is definitely proceeding on the strictest Nazi lines, even following the technique of organization.' In December 1948, he made another longish comment on the RSS: 'The RSS has been essentially a secret organization with a public façade, having no rules of membership, no registers, no accounts, although large sums are collected. They do not believe in peaceful methods or in Satyagraha. What they say in public is entirely opposed to what they do in private… The RSS is typical in this respect of the type of organization that grew up in various parts of Europe in support of fascism.'

In the Indian context, Nehru was clear in his mind that secularism also meant giving full protection to the minorities and removing their fears. While arguing that communalism had no validity, no basis in reality, no 'truth' in it, he wanted the people to realize that minorities, whether religious or linguistic, tended to be full of fear, however unreal, that because of their weaker numerical position, they might suffer economic, political, cultural or religious discrimination, domination or even oppression at the hands of the majority.

Nehru repeatedly asserted that this fear and the sense of insecurity had to be removed and the necessary safeguards provided to the minorities. But he was equally opposed to both minority and majority communalisms. Secularism was also in the best interests of the minorities and minority communalism harmed not only the country but the minority itself. He was quite clear that secularism meant consistently attacking all communalisms simultaneously, whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. He would give no quarter to majority communalism or to minority communalism. Both were dangerous to Indian unity and the development of the country.

Nehru was also clear, to quote him, that secularism 'does not obviously mean a state where religion as such is discouraged. It means freedom of religion and conscience, including freedom of those who may have no religion. It means free playoff all religions.' It is because of Nehru's strong stand against communalism that the communalists treated him with such animosity and hated him so much when he was alive and do so as well today.

C. Sardar Patel too was fully committed to secularism and was a staunch opponent of communalism. Though not theoretically inclined, he often publicly declared his commitment to secularism and opposition to communalism and communal organizations. In June 1947, rejecting the suggestion to make India a Hindu state, he said: 'we must not forget that there are other minorities whose protection is our primary responsibility. The State must exist for all irrespective of caste or creed.' At the Jaipur session of the Congress in December 1948, he said that the Congress and the government were determined 'to make India a truly secular state.' In February 1949, he described the talk of 'Hindu Raj'' as that made idea'. He told his audience in 1950: 'Ours is a secular state. We cannot fashion our policies or shape our conduct in the way Pakistan does it. We must see that our secular ideals are actually realized in practice… Here every Muslim should feel that he is an Indian citizen and has equal rights as an Indian. If we cannot make him feel like this, we shall not be worthy of our heritage and our country.' He was also fully secular in the Bardoli Satyagraha (1928) and all the other popular movements he led. In December 1945, he strongly opposed any electoral adjustment by the Congress with the Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal just to get a few seats more.

During 1946-47, he demanded from the British authorities and as Home member of the Government of India, took ruthless action against the communal rioters. He described the 1947 communal massacres as 'the blackest chapter in the history of India'. Of course, as was the case with Nehru, he opposed both the majority and the minority communalisms.

Regarding the role of the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS in Gandhiji's assassination, Patel was to remark in a leter to Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee on 18 July 1948: 'As regards the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha, the case relating to Gandhiji's murder is sub-judice and I should not like to say anything about the participation of the two organizations; but our reports confirm that as a result of activities of these two bodies, particularly the former (i.e., RSS), an atmosphere was created in the country due to which such a ghastly tragedy became possible. There is no doubt in my mind that the extreme section of the Hindu Mahasabha was involved in this conspiracy. The activities of the RSS constituted a clear

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threat to the existence of government and the state.' Earlier, on 6 May 1948, he had written: 'militant communalism, which was preached until only a few months ago by many spokesmen of the Mahasabha... could not but be regarded as a danger to public security. The same would apply to the RSS with the additional danger inherent in an organization run in secret on military or semi-military lines'. As the Home Minister, he banned the RSS in 1948 after Gandhiji's assassination.

D. Subhas Chandra Bose was also a stern opponent of communalism and understood the latter as an ideology to be opposed and transcended. For example, he wrote in 1940: 'Communalism will go only when the communal mentality goes. To destroy communalism is, therefore, the task of all those Indians—Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, etc., who have transcended the communal outlook and have developed a genuine nationalist mentality.'

Discussing the role of the communal parties in the freedom struggle, Subhas wrote in his autobiography, *The Indian Struggle*: 'the communal parties are more concerned with dividing amongst themselves such of the crumbs that are thrown at them from the official tables. In accordance with the time-worn policy of *divide et impera* (Divide and Rule), the Government greatly encourage these parties—just to spite the Indian National Congress and try to weaken its influence.' He also pointed out that the communal parties 'have no concern with the fight for political freedom.'

It is significant that the rules of the Independence of India League, founded by Subhas Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru and others in 1928, barred a member of a communal organization from becoming the League's member. Similarly, it was under Bose's guidance, as its president, that the National Congress put a clause in its constitution that no member of a communal organization like the Hindu Mahasabha or the Muslim League can be a member of an elective committee of the Congress.

In keeping with the long tradition of the national movement, Subhas was also fully committed to the concept of 'unity in diversity'. For example, in his famous presidential address to the Haripura session of the Congress in 1938, he said: 'This objective of unity and mutual cooperation in a common freedom does not mean the suppression in any way of the rich variety and cultural diversity of Indian life, which have to be preserved in order to give freedom and opportunity to the individual as well as to each group to develop unhindered according to its capacity and inclination.'

E. All sorts of communalists are, wrongly and dishonestly, trying to utilize for their own politics the names and fame of Bhagat Singh and his comrades. In fact, more than any other contemporary Indian leader, with the exception of Gandhiji, Bhagat Singh understood the danger that communalism posed to Indian society and nation and India's anti-imperialist struggle.

Bhagat Singh often warned his comrades and young followers that communalism was as big an enemy of the Indian people as colonialism. In 1926 Bhagat Singh and his comrades established the Naujawan Bharat Sabha as the open wing of the revolutionaries. One of its major objectives was to fight communalism in Punjab and to free politics 'from religious sentiments.' In April 1928, a conference of youth to reorganize the Naujawan Bharat Sabha was held. Bhagat Singh and his comrades successfully opposed the proposal that youth belonging to communal organizations such as the Akali Party should be permitted to join its ranks. They also criticized the use of religion to serve communal purposes. The Manifesto of the Sabha, issued at the time, condemned communal leaders for 'creating a false issue and screening the real one.'

Similarly, two of the six rules of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha were: 'To have nothing to do with communal bodies or other parties which disseminate communal ideas' and to 'create the spirit of general toleration among the public considering religion as a matter of personal belief of man and to act upon it firmly.'

What was true of Bhagat Singh was equally true of other revolutionaries who believed in armed struggle. The Ghadar Party (1914-1918) self-consciously adopted secularism as its creed, separated religion from politics, declared religion to be the personal affair of an individual and set out to create a secular consciousness among its members and followers. As the famous Ghadarite, Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna put it later: 'We were not Sikhs or Punjabis, our religion was patriotism.'

The Kakori martyrs, 1925-28, were no less secular. Horrified by the communal riots of the 1920s and the communal divide being created by communal organizations, Ramprasad Bismil had, in his last message in January 1928, urged Hindus and Muslims to unite. Referring to his close association with Ashfaquallah Khan, another Kakori martyr, he had written: 'We appeal to our countrymen that if they have even a little regret over our deaths, they should establish Hindu-Muslim unity. This is our last wish and this unity will also serve as our memorial.'

In his message from Faizabad Jail on 16 December 1927, Ashfaquallah Khan had also appealed: 'Fellow Indians, to whichever religion or community you may belong, unite in the service of your country. Don't fight each other. Unite in the struggle against the foreign rulers to free your country.'

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Appendix II:

COMMUNALISTS AND THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

One of the best tests of communalism is the relation it bore to the actual, historically specific, struggle against foreign domination. The communalists have, of course, no credentials so far as the national movement is concerned. This is their Achilles heel, their vulnerable spot.

Though the communalists tried to disguise their communalism as nationalism, the hard truth remained that they did not participate in any of the ongoing, anti-imperialist mass campaigns. Nor did they initiate and organize any movement of their own against colonial rule. Some of the communal leaders—M.A. Jinnah, Dr. Hedgewar, V.D. Savarkar, Bhai Parmanand, Master Tara Singh, Maulana Shaukat Ali—had a strong nationalist past and had earlier participated in the anti-imperialist struggle. But this was true of their pre-communal past, before they emerged as communal leaders. Once they became full-fledged communal leaders, their anti-imperialist activity ceased and they either became opponents of the ongoing national movement or adopted a passive attitude towards it. Both the Hindu and Muslim communalists adopted loyalist positions *vis-à-vis* British rulers, especially after 1937. They sought favours from the colonial regime, often supported and cooperated with it, and, in any case, avoided conflict with it. Interestingly, while opposing the nationalist movement, they did not hesitate to cooperate with each other in state legislatures, municipalities and district boards as also to join hands in cooperating with the colonial authorities. Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communalists quite often joined together in provincial cabinets, for example in Sindh, Punjab and Bengal, under the benign guidance of the colonial bureaucracy.

Nor was this accidental. The two communalisms were two sides of the same coin. Communalism was the product of the colonial policy of Divide and Rule and the colonial authorities had encouraged and promoted it in various ways since it divided the nationalist, anti-imperialist forces. Hindu and Muslim communalisms were clones of each other. After 1936, both evolved and promoted the two-nation theory, which led to the emergence of the idea of the partition of India. In 1938 Jinnah and the Muslim League put forward the theory that Hindus and Muslims constituted two separate nations and could not live together. Savarkar had propounded the theory even earlier in December 1937 in his presidential address to the Hindu Mahasabha: ‘There are’, he declared, ‘two nations in the main: The Hindus and the Muslims in India.’ In fact, even earlier in 1923, in his book, the *Hindutva*, Savarkar had so defined an Indian national as to exclude Muslims, Christians and Parsis. Savarkar’s and Jinnah’s two-nation theory had been fully endorsed by M.S. Golwalkar, the real builder of the RSS in his pamphlet the *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, where he declared: ‘The non-Hindu peoples in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no ideas but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture…in one word, they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment—not even citizen's rights.'

The communalists launched furious attacks upon the national movement and its leaders, especially Mahatma Gandhi. This is brought out in Section IV(C) above.

The leaders of the RSS-BJP are acutely conscious of the absence of nationalism in the politics of the communalists of the nationalist era, of their not having taken part in the struggle for freedom or opposed colonial rule. Yet they don't know how to treat the actual, historical national movement. They can't ignore it or afford to denigrate it; nor can they celebrate it. Consequently, they now try to acquire false nationalist ancestors or to establish spurious linkage with the nationalist movement by falsely trying to appropriate selectively some of the nationalist leaders as their political or ideological parents. They also try to portray the great socio-religious reformers of the 19th and 20th centuries as their progenitors or predecessors. Thus they have tried turn by turn to claim to be the descendents and heirs of Gandhiji, Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad and other National Revolutionaries, Subhas Bose, B.G. Tilak, Sardar Patel, Swami Vivekananda, Bankim Chatterji, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and others.

But they have failed in the task. As pointed out earlier, the leaders of the national movement from Dadabhai Naoroji to Gandhi certainly differed from each other on socio-economic programme and policies or on how to fight colonialism or the role of non-violence, armed struggle, and constitutional methods. But they shared in common commitment to the struggle against colonialism, communalism and casteism, and to democracy and civil liberties, secularism, independent economic development and a pro-poor orientation. On these values they would make no compromise. They even accommodated mild communalists in their rank so long as they did not preach hatred of other religious communities and opposed colonial rule. The communalists were expelled from the nationalist ranks only when they began to advocate communal hatred and communal separation from 1937 onwards.

Having failed in the task of appropriating real national leaders, the RSS and BJP used their control over the Central Government, the official media, the NCERT and the text books to put forward Savarkar, Hedgewar, etc. as great nationalist leaders.

Appendix III

COMMUNALISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM

The tendency—quite common today—to equate religious fundamentalism with communalism or to treat one as the synonym of the other is also quite wrong.

What are the basic features of fundamentalism? First of all, the fundamentalists argue for return to the fundamental tenets of a religion, for return to the formulations and meanings given to a religion at the time of its foundation in its first texts. Consequently, all later developments, exegeses, interpretations, etc. are to be rejected and wiped out. The fundamentalists regard all efforts to interpret, not to speak of amending, the original texts in the light of modern social conditions and state of human knowledge as blasphemous, as acts of enemies within.

Second, the fundamentalists assert that all aspects and areas of life are to be governed by the true, revealed religion as embodied in the original texts. God's words and law are to be the basis of society, economy, polity, culture, and law, and the entire domestic and personal life of the believer. Also, in particular, all contemporary laws have to be derived from the earliest or founding texts.

Third, more specifically, the fundamentalists attack the separation of religion from politics and the state, and, therefore, the idea of secular state. If God is supreme overall, then the political rule is also His domain, and how can then the state be outside the religious realm? The state, in fact, has to be a *theocracy*.

Similarly, the fundamentalists insist on religious control over education so that not only is true religion taught in schools and colleges but nothing contrary is taught. The fundamentalists, therefore, advocate boycott of modern state-run or state-supported schools and their replacement by schools where the traditional religious system of teaching is followed.

Fourth, the fundamentalists do not believe in the equality of all religions or even the grant of liberty to all other religions to exist, for how can false religions be treated as equal to the true religion or be given the liberty to preach and practice falsehood? The same logic leads the fundamentalists to oppose the concept of the unity of all religions. In fact, most of them urge the prohibition and suppression of religions, other than their own in countries where followers of their religion constitute the majority. One slightly different but in fact essentially the same aspect of this is the demand of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad that all Islamic religious or cultural influences should be removed from the country. Of course, the irony or the absurdity of the situation is that the fundamentalists demand the liberty to preach and practice their own religions and religion-based social practices where they happen to be a minority. They also, in that case, often demand separation of state from religion. They also, in that case, often demand separation of state from religion, i.e., the religion of the majority.

We may also take note of a few other features of fundamentalism. It is opposed to reason and rationalism, humanism and secularism. It is anti-science and denies the validity of all human knowledge which is outside the religious realm. The fundamentalists are also opposed to the idea of popular sovereignty and the resulting practice of democracy and constitutional government. This is, in a way, inevitable for if sovereignty belongs to God and all laws and policies should be based on God's words as revealed in the holy texts, then where is the scope for constitutions and for the people to determine their own laws and state and social policies. There can also not exist more than one party—the party of God or the true believers.

In general, the fundamentalists attack the basic ideas and values of the Enlightenment, especially modern science, reason and the idea of progress, for being Western, and, in the case of Christian fundamentalists, for being pagan in origin and for their claim to be independent of any particular religious faith.

We should be clear on one point while trying to understand fundamentalism: even though sharing some common features, it is different from devout belief, or religious orthodoxy, or belief in the fundamental tenets and values of one's religion. For the religiously orthodox are not intolerant of other's religious beliefs. Take, for example, both the firmness of religious belief and the high degree of catholicity towards other beliefs among the Sufis, Vaishnavites and founders of Sikh religion in our country.

Fundamentalism and communalism do have certain ideological elements in common. But they also differ from each other. Both attack the concept of separation of religion from politics and the state. Both oppose the concept of equal truth in all religions or the political and social unity of the followers of different religions. Both advocate control over education by the followers of the dominant religion. Both believe in the restoration of the past values and past 'greatness' rather than in progress towards the unknown so that greatness and progress lie in the future. Both share the notion that their societies had achieved near-complete human progress in the very early centuries when their religions were founded and were practiced in their pristine purity and then declined and 'fell'. Both oppose secularism and believe that it corrupts society. Both oppose secular nationalism and the anti-imperialist view of history.

But these common features do not make the two the same. The two differ in many ways, though in a multi religious society a fundamentalist tends to be communal. However, the communalists need not be fundamentalists and are quite often not fundamentalists. For example, in India, the Hindu Mahasabha, the RSS, the BJP, the Muslim League and the Akalis were and are communal but they were not and are not necessarily fundamentalists. Similarly, Pakistan and to a certain extent Bangladesh are communal states but they are not fundamentalist or even theocratic states. If we look at the programmatic, policy or ideological statements and propaganda of the communal parties, the difference becomes clear, for not many of the fundamentalist tenets would be found in them.

Let us take up a few examples. Modern science is quite compatible with communalism, but the fundamentalists see it as an enemy. The fundamentalists oppose any notion of reform or further development of religious beliefs and tenets or social structures, practices and institutions based on them. They advocate so-called purity of their religions and try to avoid or root out folk elements in them. The communalists can favour reform of inherited religious and social structures. This is, in particular, true of Hindu communalists. The basic, fundamental tenet of Hindu social organization is the caste system and the basic social text is *Manusmriti*. There is little in the *Vedas* or *Upanishads* or *Gita* on which a fundamentalist can build a full social structure. *Manusmriti* is perhaps the only such text. Yet hardly any Hindu communalist is committed to it or to the caste system in a fundamentalist manner. In fact, except for a handful of die-hard priests, hardly any Hindu communalist today depends on basic iniquitous features of the caste system or claims to live by, or advocates that others live by, the diktats of the *Manusmriti*. Similarly, most Muslim communalists do not advocate the observance of criminal law in the manner in which the fundamentalists do so.

The fundamentalists seriously urge the actual revival of the pristine past and its religious, social, cultural, legal and political practices. This is not the case with the communalists who may appeal to the past as ideology or nostalgia but whose gaze is clearly fixed on the modern world.

The relationship of the fundamentalists and the communalists to religion is also only superficially similar. The fundamentalists are deeply religious, their entire ideology relates to religion and they want to base the state, society and daily life of the individual on religion as defined by them. The communalists, on the other hand, have hardly much to do with religion, except that they base their politics on religious identity and thus use religion for the purposes of the struggle for political power. The communal state is thus not necessarily a theocratic state. As pointed out earlier too, even when declared to be Islamic states, Pakistan and

Bangladesh are communal and semi-communal states respectively and not theocratic or fundamentalist states. Interestingly, only a minority of the communalists in Pakistan or Bangladesh demand their literal application of the ancient laws (according to the Shariah), and few Hindu or Muslim communalists do so in India.

Similarly, the fundamentalists want to Christianize or Islamize or Hinduize the whole world. Not so the communalists who want to communalize only their own society.

It is, therefore, not accidental that in our country the communalists have often not only not been, nor are, fundamentalists but have not been even religious. Thus M.A. Jinnah or Liaquat Ali Khan or Feroze Khan Noon were not very religious and V.D. Savarkar was an atheist. And by no stretch of imagination can L.K. Advani, Bal Thackeray or Atal Behari Vajpayee be considered fundamentalists.

The targets of fundamentalism and communalism are also very different. The fundamentalists basically target or even purge fellow believers who do not agree with them, while the targets of the communalists most often are other religious communities or defenders of secularism in their own religious community, though, of course, fundamentalists also tend to be intolerant of other religions.

There is a major critical reason why the communalists are seldom fundamentalists and can even oppose the latter. They make every attempt to communalize and unite all the members of their religious community. That alone can bring them into political power, especially in a democratic society. But it is in the very nature of fundamentalism to divide and constantly fragment the followers of a religion. In northern India, it can be observed that Arya Samajists stop propagating the basic tenets of Arya Samaj once they become communal leaders lest they lose the support of the believers in the traditional Sanatan Dharma. In the past twenty years or so *pucca* Arya Samajists have forgotten all about Swami Dayanand's anti-idolatry dicta when taking up the cause of temples at Ayodhya or in other places.

In fact, V.D. Savarkar coined the words 'Hindutva' to avoid emphasizing any religious definition of Hindu communalism, for, as he put it, seeing Hindu communalism through religious eyes would divide and not unite Hindus.

And finally, why it is absolutely necessary to differentiate between fundamentalism and communalism. To confuse the two with one another is unscientific, but it is also politically extremely dangerous, for it is then easy for the communalists, who pose the main danger to our democratic and secular polity and the unity of the nation and the people, to show that one part of the charge is wrong, that they are not fundamentalists. Moreover, because, for historical reasons, fundamentalism is and would remain weak among Hindus, while it is at present a strong phenomenon in the Muslim part of the world, the Hindu communalists can and do argue that the Hindus are not fundamentalists and, therefore, communal, while Muslims are prone to being both. Thus to confuse fundamentalism, with communalism is to provide the communalists with an alibi. Moreover, in a modern, rapidly industrializing country with a large number of educated and scientifically trained persons, it is not easy for the majority to take highly implausible, fundamentalist doctrines seriously or to persecute people in the name of religion. On the other hand, communalism, is expressed in a modern and plausible idiom and shows a spurious concern for traditional culture and can, therefore, be accepted by even persons with a modern mind.

Of course, by not calling the communalists fundamentalists one is not giving them a clean chit. By distinguishing between the two we are trying to know and understand them better and, therefore, to fight them better. The two are to be opposed differently because they pose two different types of danger, though sometimes the danger is combined.

The reason why the confusion between the two terms has risen is, once again, because Western journalists and even academics started using the two terms synonymously because of the ease of expression; their readers do not understand what the term communalism means, while the term fundamentalism is not only a current coin but has been familiar to the people in the West because of the over one century-old Jewish fundamentalism and Christian fundamentalism codified in the famous encyclical *The Syllabus of Modern Errors*, issued by Pope Pius IX in 1864. We have borrowed the confusion partly because many do not understand that communalism is and partly because we seldom look Western gift-horses in the mouth. And, surprisingly, this is sometimes true even of those who are politically radical and secular. Many also use the word fundamentalist for the communalists because they hesitate to use the much more apt word communalist for them since the nationalist movement has made the latter a dirty, derogatory word.

Appendix IV: WHAT SHOULD SECULAR PERSONS AND FORCES DO

I. We should not let the communalists set the agenda or just react to their agenda. For example, we should focus on the danger that communalism poses to the Indian nation and the Indian people, and therefore, attack, communalism for being anti-national, anti-democratic, opposed to Indian culture, values and civilization and to the tolerant and plural spirit of Hindu religion and Indian civilization as also of Islam, Sikhism and Christianity. We should gradually change the terms or issues of debate in politics and society as also on the communal question. We have to counter communalism by refocusing on the political and social debate.

II-A. The communalists have been claiming to be the guardians of Indian culture and civilization. We should question this claim. We should point out that communalism is opposed to, and tends to destroy, the basis of our cultural and civilization values and traditions such as those of pluralism, syncretism and synthesis, which, along with the best of modern values of secularism and democracy formed the basis of our national movement and the Constitution. We should emphasize the multi-cultural character of Indian society, as also the gradual historical evolution of our composite culture.

B. We should explain to the people the values and nature of democracy, national development, national interest, national pride and national strength in a multi-religious, multi-cultural society. National unity should not be confused with homogenization, nor should diversity be counterpoised to unity. In fact, any effort to do away with our diversity, any effort to marginalize minorities (religious or cultural) would pose a threat to national unity. We should learn a lesson from the events in Iraq. Iraq failed to offer resistance to US attack because Shias had been divided from Sunnis and Kurds from non-Kurds in an attempt to force homogeneity in the name of national unity. Similarly, Lebanon has virtually seized to exist because of majority-minority conflict. Sri Lanka is another country which is suffering from the earlier attempt of the Sinhala majority to marginalize the Tamil minority. We should bring home to the Indian people the basic approach of Jawaharlal Nehru in the *Discovery of India* regarding respect for India's great cultural heritage from the Vedic period on and its openness to fresh influences and challenges, resulting in the formation of a composite culture which simultaneously welcomes diversity.

C. We should refute the false claim of the Hindu communalists that they are the champions of Hinduism. We should develop our own discourse on or exposition of Hinduism,Islam, Christianity, Sikhism and religion as a whole as Gandhiji did and of Indian culture as Nehru did. In particular, we should bring out how Gandhiji dealt with religion, secularism and communalism. As pointed out earlier, we should also not fall prey to misleading phrases and words, such as saffronization, Bhagwa-Karan, parivar, Hindu nationalism, Hindu right, cow-belt.

D. We should actively emphasize India's achievements in the past, though not blindly and not on a false basis. Still the question is; what should we admire in the past and what should we criticize: We should adopt the approach of Gandhiji, Nehru, C. Rajgopalachari, Tilak, Ranade, Maulana Azad and Swami Vivekananada in this respect. Vivekananda, for example, opposed anti-intellectual and irrational religious and social dogmas of the past. He said: 'Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason through which every science justifies? Are the same methods of investigation which apply to the sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of religion? In my opinion, this must be so, and I am also of opinion that the sooner this is done the better.' He also said: 'Liberty in thought and action is the only condition of life, growth and well being: Where it does not exist, the man, the race, and the nation must go down.'

E. We should bring out the true character of communalism, especially that it is different from religion and from morality-based politics. We should differentiate between religion and misuse of religion for communal purposes.

F. We should vigorously oppose the concept of 'soft Hindutva'. To take pride in Hinduism, its plural traditions and in the composite Indian culture whose roots lie deep in our history and Hindu traditions, philosophic systems, epics, etc., and which was further developed in the medieval and modern periods is not 'Hindutva' or communalism. To show consideration for the religious feelings of the Hindus is no more 'soft Hindutva' or 'soft communalism' than to do so for the religious feelings of the Muslims, Sikhs or Christians is 'soft communalism'. Similarly, participating in religious-cum-social functions such as Diwali, Durga Puja, Id or Christmas is not communalism of any sort, 'soft' or 'hard'; but to try to impose any particular view of society, culture or religion is certainly undesirable. We should not be influenced by T.V. journalism and blur the line between the secularists and the communalists. To talk of 'soft Hindutva' is to give an alibi to Hindu communalists, who can, then, turn around and say that there is no difference between them and the secularists—only the former are for 'hard Hindutva' and the latter for 'soft Hindutva.'

Of course, any opportunism towards communalism or concession to it should be avoided and condemned when it occurs. But then this opportunism or concession should be clearly defined.

III. The secular parties and persons should assert loudly and aggressively (*thok baja ke bolen*) that we stand for nationalism, national unity, secularism, democracy, economic and social development. etc. We should define nationalism and focus on the character and achievements of the national movement. We should point out how India's high place and her present economic status in the world, the development of the institutes of technology, scientific laboratories and some of Asia's and indeed world's best universities, participating in the Information Technology Revolution, the development of atomic energy on our own and of India as a nuclear power are our achievements and those of the Indian national movement. After independence, we successfully met the threats to Indian unity and resolved the problems of the linguistic states, national and official languages, the integration of the tribal peoples, the question of reservation and social justice and the low position of women.

The real questions before the people are how nationalism is to be further strengthened, divisive forces overcome, and the unresolved problems of wide-spread poverty, inequality and social justice to be dealt with.

On the other hand, the nationalist space, which communalists have been trying to occupy, should be denied to them. It should be pointed out that the communalists encourage divisive forces and, therefore, pose a threat to national unity. The narrow mentality which they generate pits an Indian against another Indian in the name of religion. Moreover, once this narrow mentality is born and flourishes it can, in time, lead to mutual antagonism among the Indian people on grounds of language, region, caste and tribe. It should, therefore, be stressed again and again that the communal parties are anti-national in character.

In this context, we should also focus on constitutional values of democracy, equality of all citizens before the law, etc. The Constitution makers did not think of themselves as Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs or even as *dalits*. The provided reservations to the *dalits* and tribals not because they were themselves dalits and tribals but because they were Indians who championed social justice and wanted to remove the blot of untouchability and discrimination from Indian society. Our Constitution puts emphasis in Indians as citizens and not as members of castes or religious communities. We should also use the existing laws, and the legal and court system, to expose the communal forces, as has been done recently in Gujarat and earlier after 1993 in Maharashtra. We should explore all legal possibilities of fighting and exposing the communalists. Existing laws do provide many such opportunities.

IV. We should educate the people regarding the values and ideological orientation of the national movement and explain how those were different from communalism or jingoism. We should emphasize that the Congressmen, the socialists of different hues, the communists and the liberals are the heirs of the national movement in different degrees and manner. On the other hand, the communalists did not take part in the anti-imperialist struggle and even opposed it, especially after 1936. They are now trying to appropriate different nationalist leaders and derive a false pedigree from them so as to hide their negative role in the freedom struggle.

In this respect, their negative role in the freedom struggle, as well as in the struggle for social justice and women's liberation (e.g. their total opposition to the Hindu Code Bills in the early 1950s) and their almost abusive critique of Gandhiji, Nehru and other nationalist leaders should be brought out.

The communalist traditions of the Muslim League, from which Pakistan is still suffering, the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS are also anti-democratic. The anti-democratic constitution, traditions, and functioning of the RSS should also be brought out. The supreme leader of the RSS, for example, is nominated by the predecessor and acts as such for life and cannot be removed. Similarly, its other organs are also nominated and not elected. Its entire organizational structure is undemocratic.

V. The communalists have been trying to distort India's past and propagate their own distorted version of it through their control of education, media and NGOs, the RSS—and Jamat-e Islami-controlled schools, various educational schemes under RSS-BJP control, etc. In general, they use their control over state machinery to spread communal ideology. In particular, they distort history through oral propaganda and school text books, because a distorted version of history forms the heart of the communal ideology.

VI. It is necessary to attack all communalisms, whether of the majority or of the minorities, simultaneously.

a. Hindu communalism is not just anti-Muslim. Hindus and Hinduism are equally threatened by it. Similarly, minority communalisms are opposed to the interests of the minorities.
b. Bring out the instances of alliance at the local level between different communalisms.
c. There is need to project secular Muslim, Sikh and Christian voices from the platforms of secular parties, and people made familiar with these voices. We must actively counter the BJP propaganda that only Hindus are secular and tolerant and that Muslims and Sikhs are basically communal.

VII-A. Meet the charge of Minorityism and pseudo-secularism fully.

B. Point out that the charge was made by V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar against Gandhiji and other nationalist leaders.

C. While meeting the charge, examine why it appeals to some.

D. When we speak to Hindus we should be as careful about their susceptibilities as we are of the susceptibilities of Muslims, Sikhs and Christians.

E. We should avoid vote bank politics. We should also discourage the minorities from acting as a solid block. If Muslims, for example, are publicly seen as taking collective decisions to vote one way or the other, the Hindus in that area would also tend to coalesce. Of course, the minorities would naturally tend to oppose a BJP of Shiv Sena candidate. That is natural. But that is different from Muslims meeting as Muslims and voting together. We should learn a lesson from the political parties in the USA. The black people vote overwhelmingly for the Democratic Party, because the Republican party contains strong white racist elements. While the Democratic Party points to its anti-racialist policies and outlook, it *does not* ask the black people to vote *as* blacks. Black leaders do not publicly get together to decide for whom to vote. The secular political parties should also not appeal for political support to religious and so-called community leaders.

VIII. Communalism constitutes a broad spectrum of many elements or a rainbow with a range of colours. Therefore, people should not be branded as communalists simply if they exhibit some communal elements, though these communal elements should be brought to light and critiqued. [See Section I(H) above.]

IX. As brought out in Section I (i) above, we should also distinguish between communal leaders and ideologues and their ordinary followers who have imbibed communal ideology and function in a communal manner.

X. We should firmly oppose those who say that secularism is a Western concept, especially its definition as separation

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of religion from politics. We should point out that secularism is rooted in Indian tradition, formed a bed-rock of Indian national movement, and is enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

XI. There is need for mass political, educational, and ideological work against communalism. We have neglected such work upto now. Democracy in itself does not act as a shield against communalism. There is need for a simultaneous all-India ideological campaign. It may take the form of an all-India week against communalism, with each day devoted to a particular leader, viz. Gandhiji, Nehru, Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose, Maulana Azad, Swami Vivekananda and Bhagat Singh. Not only the higher and middle level party workers but ordinary party workers, rural and small town teachers, lawyers and doctors should be involved in the campaign. Help of secular intellectuals should also be taken. Interaction with them should be at an intellectual and ideological plane and not for exchange of favours, or gathering of votes, or strengthening of party organization. (Their help may also be taken to utilize letters-to-the-editor-forum in the manner in which the RSS-BJP do.) Young people should be specially targeted and involved in the campaign.

Even before a mass campaign workshop on communalism and secularism for the leaders and cadres should be organized. The level of ignorance of the cadres of all secular parties on these questions is phenomenal.

XII. It is necessary to have a sustained campaign against communalism. Many secular persons and parties get aroused when major communal violence occurs in the country; but they go back to passivity after some time. Similarly, some become active anti-communalists during elections and then forget it all once the elections are over.

XIII. Proper anti-communal ideological work requires that we must know what people say, what communal beliefs prevail among the people of an area, a village, a town, a mohalla, a school, a college, a children's magazine, and, of course, TV and other media. It is these concrete beliefs which have to be dealt with. We have to find out and address the real concerns of the people; and not merely address questions which bother us. We have to analyze and counter those elements of communal ideology, which appeal to otherwise sane persons. Hence, local political workers must go among the people and find out what communal prejudices, stereotypes, and beliefs prevail among them. If there is any truth in them, it must be immediately remedied.

XIV. Secular forces and governments have shown many weaknesses in tackling communalism and communal violence in the past. We should be frank in acknowledging them. In particular, we have not done enough to check the spread of communal ideology. Some of us, especially those in the Congress, have also been lax in condemning and suppressing communal violence, for example in Delhi in 1984, in Punjab during 1982-84, in Bombay in 1993, and in Meerut, Muradabad, etc., earlier. We should promise not to repeat the mistakes in future. Congressmen may, however, claim credit for not having deliberately encouraged communalism or communal violence in these places and also for having done well in other places.

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XV. Another weakness of the non-Congress secular parties and individuals has been blind anti-Congressism which has often led them to directly or indirectly support, or remain weak in their opposition to, the communal forces. While political differences and mutual opposition is a normal feature of parliamentary democratic processes care should be taken that they do not lead to the growth of communal forces. Luckily, this type of anti-Congressism is on the decline and the process should be further consciously promoted.

XVI-A. Lastly we should realize that war against communalism is like a war of position: (a) it has to be fought on multiple fronts and (b) it will not be one continuous forward movement till victory. Often there would be setbacks on the way on one front or the other. To see every setback as a permanent defeat would be wrong. Under no circumstances should we be disheartened. After all an ideology nurtured for over 100 years and having deep roots in the minds of men and women is not going to disintegrate and disappear in a short period of time.

B. In a fast changing world, the communalists also often change their tactics as also their ground. We would regularly analyze such changes and develop an adequate response to them.

XVII. We should promote common celebration of festivals such as Holi, Dewali, Id, Onam, and Christmas. We should also bring out the heroic role played by local leaders, such as Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Mahabir Tyagi, in promoting communal harmony and secularism during our freedom struggle, the Partition days, and after Independence.